EDUCATION, YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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FOREWORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Without active participation by young people, it will not be possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) Goals, approved by United Nations Member States in 2000.

The 2010 World Youth Conference gives us the opportunity to review the MDGs and the EFA Goals from the perspective of youth, and to assess the contribution that our programmes and activities have made toward reaching these goals.

Education is vital because of the role it plays in reducing poverty, fostering healthy lifestyles, encouraging life skills for sustainable development, and building participatory citizenship.

The Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC/UNESCO Santiago) wishes to take advantage of the space for dialogue provided by the 2010 World Youth Conference to share its vision on the progress achieved and remaining challenges for youth education, as well as innovative experiences at the country level, which may inspire other countries and regions in the world.

UNESCO carries out its work in support of the Ministries of Education and civil society organizations, in the context of joint programmes with other members of the United Nations family.

This document is the result of a joint effort by UNESCO Offices and Institutes in Latin America and the Caribbean. It addresses four issues important to youth in the region: quality education for all youth; education for peaceful coexistence and non-violence; sexuality education and HIV prevention; and education for sustainable development.

We hope that this joint effort will help foster the conditions necessary for the youth of Latin America and the Caribbean to fully become actors in their own development.

J. Sequeira
Director
Regional Bureau of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean
OREALC/UNESCO Santiago
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The role of education

“Education is not just a basic right, but a link that helps to connect growth, equality and participation in society. Many international commitments to progress in education treat it as a key factor in development. A country’s social, economic and cultural situation can be enhanced through education. Higher levels of education among the population are linked to improvements in other key factors for development and well-being such as productivity, social mobility, poverty reduction, building citizenship and social identity and, ultimately, reinforcing social cohesion”.

ECLAC (2010). Achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equality in Latin America and the Caribbean: Progress and Challenges

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QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL YOUTH

Introduction and UNESCO’s commitment

Raising the education level of the world’s population is a key factor in development, evident in the virtual circle that links access to a decent job and reduction of poverty to education. Moreover, equal access to education is fundamental in the empowerment of women and improvement of the population’s health.

The right to quality education is the focus of UNESCO’s efforts to promote the Education for All (EFA) initiative worldwide, drawing from the Dakar Framework for Action. The Dakar Framework for Action sets six ambitious goals for 2015 related to early childhood care and education; universal primary education; ensuring the learning needs of all young people and adults; literacy; gender parity and equality; and quality education.

To ensure the right to a quality education and thus contribute to the construction of more equitable societies, education systems must create the conditions that can reverse prevailing inequalities in society. This can be achieved through inclusive policies and practices, with special emphasis on groups that are excluded or in danger of being marginalised. UNESCO’s guide and agenda draw from the conclusions and recommendations of the 48th Session of the International Conference on Education, "Inclusive education: The way of the future", held in Geneva in 2008.

UNESCO also recognises that education for youth and adults enables people to develop their capabilities, enrich their knowledge and improve their technical or professional skills. This is a fundamental aspect of the right to education that performs a crucial role in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Internationally and regionally, the organization is responsible for follow-up and supervisory activities of the Belém Framework for Action: harnessing the power and potential of adult learning and education for a viable future, approved in 2009 by the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTÉA VI).

The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (EPT/PRELAC) is the road map education ministers of the region have forged through regional dialogue and exchange with civil society to attain the international Education for All goals. Considering that inequality continues to be the region’s primary challenge, Ministers of Education have set equity policy as top priority. They insist the task requires more and better investment in education; how and where investments are made in education must be reviewed. Likewise, the prevention of violence in schools and the need to bring education options in line with the needs of young people to lower school dropout rates are viewed as the most pressing areas for intervention.

Regionally it is widely acknowledged that primary education is absolutely inadequate in preparing children for full citizenship and for entering the job market. This makes a compelling case for extending the focus to secondary and higher education. In the Sixth Inter-American Conference (Ecuador, 2009), Ministers of Education of the Americas pledged to intensify efforts to ensure at least 75% of youth access to quality secondary education no later than 2010, increase the percentage of young people who complete secondary school, and develop strategies for making secondary education accessible to all youth no later than 2015. At the Fifth Summit of the Americas (Trinidad and Tobago, 2009), chiefs-of-state agreed to increase the tertiary education participation rate to a minimum of 40% by 2020.


In Latin America and the Caribbean a significant percentage of students at the age when compulsory schooling ends lack the reading, mathematics, and science skills they need to participate fully in work and social life. This situation, as well as the high secondary school dropout rate, underscores the importance of developing education policy for lifelong learning. Flexible education systems must be developed to provide multiple opportunities and establish bridges between them, enabling people to complete their education at any level through opportunities for entry or re-entry into the education system, and by bringing their professional skills up-to-date.

Funding is a key element of meeting the commitments pledged. UNESCO believes quality education for all can only be achieved with broader allocation of resources for education, in addition to a strategic focus on vulnerable groups. In its 2008 conference in Oslo, the High-Level Group on EFA recommended that at least 6% of GNPs be allocated to education, a recommendation previously proposed in the Delors Report of 1996.

Despite progress achieved in recent years, much remains to be done to ensure that youth complete secondary education, which ECLAC considers the threshold for raising oneself out of poverty. Nearly half (48%) of all youth between 20 and 24 years of age still are unable to complete this education level and in six countries of the region (Colombia, Dominica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Surinam) less than a third have completed secondary schooling. Moreover, marked differences persist within countries, to the detriment of students from poor families, rural areas, and indigenous people or of African descent. For example, ECLAC statistics (2010) indicate that 80% of students from higher income sectors of the population complete secondary school, in contrast to 20% of students from lower-income sectors. In regards to gender, a small number of countries still show differences in detriment to females, but in may countries disparities have reversed and now the male population is less likely to complete secondary school. Such is the case in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, Dominica and Brazil.

Quality education for all youth in Latin America and the Caribbean

Rates of primary education access and completion improved considerably in the region, in spite of certain countries lagging behind, particularly in the Caribbean. Even so, one of every ten Latin American youth between ages 15 and 19 has not completed primary education. While absolute youth illiteracy affects just 3% of the population between 15 and 24 years of age, in some countries such as Guatemala and Nicaragua, youth illiteracy rates hover between 13 and 14%.

Equity is a priority for Education Ministers regionally, in the context of PRELAC. School alone cannot overcome economic, social and cultural inequality. This points to the importance of inter-sectoral social policy designed to reduce poverty and improve living conditions for groups marginalised today.

Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors, 1996): learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. A pertinent education enables the flexibility of educational experiences so as to meet the specific needs and conditions of people.

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Throughout the region, just 11% of secondary students chose technical-professional training. Professional teaching programmes have suffered the consequences of funding cuts, insufficient planning, and a weak link to the labour market, which affect quality and diminish their appeal to youth.

Many secondary students abandon school not only on account of economic problems or difficult life situations but also due to educational options that are irrelevant to their lives and future.

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago analysed curriculum and education policy instruments of countries of the region from the perspective of the four pillars of education identified in the Delors Report: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. The study discovered that “learning to be” and “learning to do” are less developed regionally. It also found that despite

the consensus regarding students’ role as protagonists in the construction of their learning, the training they receive in schools does not prepare them to develop fundamental skills such as autonomy, emotion management and leadership. 

Assessment of students’ performance levels is a way of evaluating education quality. Results of the PISA 2006 study indicate that students in Latin American countries who participated in the study have a proficiency level much lower than students of OECD countries. In every area of study, at least half the students evaluated—50% in reading, 61% in mathematics and 52% in sciences—exhibit low proficiency levels. Considering the importance of scientific and technological knowledge for citizen participation and professional insertion of youth as well as the development of countries of the region, these conclusions are troubling.

Public investment in education is another key factor in quality education for all. Regionally, private investment certainly facilitates the extension of educational services yet it also leads to processes of student segregation that affect both access as well as education quality. The percentage of GNP allocated to education in Latin America (4.1% in 2007) is well below what is considered the threshold required for achieving the goal of quality education for all.

Concern for greater equity poses the need to implement funding systems that take into account the greatest needs of certain segments of the population, giving more to those who have less in order to bridge the existing gap. Investment efficiency also deserves special attention. For example, in Latin America more than US$18,000 million will be lost during the 2010 scholastic year due to students who repeat a grade at primary and secondary school levels.

Our actions in the region

The Regional Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC) recognises education as a public good and fundamental human right, of which society as a whole is responsible and the State is bound as guarantor. Although countries of the region have approved various agreements, treaties and international action frameworks on the matter, not all have implemented the laws and conditions necessary to put them into practice. For example, in most countries education is mandatory but not free. UNESCO provides technical counsel to governments on drafting or amending legislation and education policy to bring national law in compliance with the international treaties and frameworks to which they are signatories.

Furthermore, inclusive education is still a long way from becoming reality. “We have to re-think the system to make it inclusive. Inclusion does not only refer to students with disabilities but also to all who are excluded or at risk of being marginalised. Its purpose is to guarantee quality education for all, by building the capacity of educational systems and schools to address the diverse learning needs of students, regardless of their social and cultural origins, individual characteristics and living situations. From this perspective, students should not be asked to adapt or assimilate to the available teaching offerings and learning situations conceived for standard students, as occurs when integration is the focus. Rather, schools must be capable of adapting to the diverse needs of students”, notes Rosa Blanco, regional inclusive education specialist at OREALC/UNESCO Santiago.

UNESCO not only imparts and promotes various international educational frameworks (EFA, lifelong learning, inclusive education), but also endeavours to bring society in agreement with these goals through forums, conferences, and seminars so that these perspectives and guidelines spread, take hold in civil society and move beyond academic circles. For this to take place, we must work closely with Ministries of Education, NGOs, universities and unions that are engaged in these discussions. In this
way, the mobilisation of all actors can be expanded and strategic alliances can be created to develop policies and programmes that are adaptable to every context.

UNESCO’s research initiatives, both regionally as well as nationally, represent an important element for shaping education policy on education and youth in the region. For example, in drafting education policy, decision makers may plan actions that touch upon the factors that most influence learning, based on research findings. The organization also supports countries by monitoring the impact of development on education through OREALC/UNESCO Santiago’s Regional Information System (SIRI), developing indicators that enable countries to monitor the progress achieved as well as the implementation levels of various commitments and recommendations.

Through the Innovemos Network as well as seminars and workshops, UNESCO supports the sharing of successful experiences and reinforces the capacity of nations in the educational field.

It is also involved, both on the regional and national fronts, in mobilising resources for education through bilateral and multilateral cooperative activities, convening emerging donors, and fostering South-South cooperation.

Photo: © UNESCO Brasilia.
Schools must be capable of adapting to the diverse needs of students.
INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES

Brazil

Joint development of youth policy

In 2006 UNESCO and the National Youth Secretariat signed a cooperation agreement on the occasion of the consolidation of a new national policy on youth, called the “Brazilian Youth Agenda: Guidelines for Development”. The programme’s major beneficiaries are leaders of governmental institutions at the federal, state and municipal levels, as well as civil society organizations that are trained to monitor and evaluate youth policy, researchers, academics, and young people who participate in youth programmes.

In the context of this agreement, UNESCO is preparing several publications based on its research that will be reference texts for decision makers on youth policy matters, including the following:

*National Youth Policies: How Are They Being Conducted in Brazil?* discusses the impact of the creation of the National Ministry for Youth and the National Youth Council five years ago on different sectors of Brazilian society. The publication identifies various levels of institutionalization of public policy for youth in Brazilian states and municipalities, describes the models and course of development of these policies and proposes a specific typology on the basis of concrete experiences;

*The Brazilian Youth Annuary* aims to identify key youth agencies that played a role in drafting Brazilian youth policy between 2003 and 2010. It facilitates direct contact between actors in the area of youth, and therefore is an important tool for strengthening the network of youth organizations;

*Participation of the Social Sector in Brazil from 2003 to 2010*. This book describes participation by Brazilian civil society in building new alliances and associations that benefit youth.

Haiti

Adapting education to the post-earthquake context

The earthquake of 12 January 2010 devastated Haiti’s capital city, Port-au-Prince. The educational system was severely affected, with thousands of students and teachers among the victims. More than 5,000 schools in the three departments most affected by the catastrophe were partially or completely destroyed. The school-year was interrupted for three months, leaving millions of students out of school and threatening to jeopardise their completion of the school year.

UNESCO implemented various actions, including the following: psychological and social training for teachers to enable them to aid their students; the creation of temporary school centres; the distribution of materials; and the reactivation of technical and professional training programmes and training of masons to apply new anti-seismic construction techniques. In addition, UNESCO has provided the Education Ministry assistance in redefining the emergency school programme and in completing the school year by training school inspectors in the three departments affected by the earthquake.

Chile

Using technology to strengthen teaching

Each lesson taught by teachers is understood only by some of the students in the class, while others are left behind, a situation that may impede the second set of students from completing the school year. Concern for youth in vulnerable situations motivated OREALC/UNESCO Santiago to offer to work on the issue of pedagogic leadership with teachers at Chilean schools to develop a model that, through the use of computers and computer programmes, addresses the different paces of student learning.

Drawing from positive work experiences of reorganizing classrooms into small groups – known as “classroom diversification” – information and communication technology (ICT) complement teachers’ lessons: “small groups of students...
are organized around ten laptops. Each group, comprised of an average of four students, has programmes that help it catch up”, explains Alfredo Rojas, ICT focal point for OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. Teachers must study these programmes and adapt them to the structure of their classes to enable each group to attain certain objectives without neglecting the most advanced students, assuring that they do not lose learning opportunities.

Cuba
Providing access to ICTs through computer clubs

UNESCO supports the NGO Computer and Electronics Youth Club, created in 1987, which forms computer clubs in every municipality to foster universal access to information and develop a knowledge society. The programme objective is to facilitate access to new information and communications technologies (ICT).

The programme has more than 300 sites that provide training in the use of ICT to anyone who so desires, particularly youth, regardless of their educational level. In a given neighbourhood a club might offer computers, printers, scanning equipment, and data storage and retrieval. The municipal governments have several sites with 60 computers, in addition to several mobile computer classrooms in isolated areas of the country.

Mexico
Construye-T: Integral youth development and school dropout prevention

They are young people ages 15 to 18, enrolled in high school’s second cycle of secondary education, but living in a world at increasing risk to gangs, violence, drugs and exclusion.

The Construye-T project addresses this situation by developing mechanisms for the protection and prevention of risk to youth, enabling them to respond assertively and constructively in adverse situations. Since June 2008, Mexico’s Public Education Secretary has worked in coordination with three United Nations agencies – UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP – to establish this programme, which has been implemented in 1,648 schools throughout Mexico, serving more than a million students.

The project designs participatory diagnostics on risk situations that may exist in schools to identify students’ needs and expectations, as well as those of their teachers and families. Its work revolves around six components: knowledge of oneself, healthy living, a culture of peace and non-violence, school and family, youth participation, and building a life project. The multifaceted approach contributes to the personal and integral development of young people.

To adequately implement the project in schools, a course was developed for teachers who are participating in the programme to enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to impart the six components. It also aspires to establish a prevention and protection system for youth that involves
the entire community, including civil society organizations, families, and other community resources in different stages of the process.

To date, 1,684 teachers have benefited from this programme.

**Cuba and the Dominican Republic**

Orientation and supervision to foster retention in the education system

Why do so many young people drop out of the school system after the first cycle of secondary education? How can this tendency be stemmed?

In Cuba and the Dominican Republic, education and youth ministries and secretariats sought technical assistance from UNESCO to find a response to these questions.

In Cuba, the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Youth Studies worked together with the Cuban National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO to foster assistance between school and community. The programme provides adolescents with integral training that includes vocational training to enable them to make the decision to remain in school, because, often, the decision to leave school is a matter of orientation. “Sometimes they leave school because the subjects they study don’t interest them. In other cases educational establishments fail to offer an adequate school environment or the family imposes an orientation that they really do not wish to follow”, explains Miguel Llivina, education programme officer from UNESCO’s office in Havana.

The work consisted of proposing student workshops run by vocational specialists. Drawing from this experience, they produced a series of paperbacks to show how to handle the moment when students must decide whether to continue schooling or drop out: *Autoestima: un tema para pensar* (“Self-esteem: an issue to think about”), ¿Cómo decidir quién quiero ser? (“How to decide who I want to be”), *Participar, un derecho de los adolescentes* (“Participation, an adolescent right”), ¿Quién soy? (“Who am I?”), and *Reflexiones acerca de la identidad* (“Reflections on identity”) are the book titles that served as the basis for holding workshops throughout the country. The issue of orientation was even the focus of a national seminar transmitted on television directed to all educators in Cuba.

In the Dominican Republic, the State Education Secretariat, the State Youth Secretariat, and the Dominican National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO implemented a pilot student-monitoring programme of the first secondary school cycle in the district of Padre Las Casas. Each educational centre develops a school map and strategic plan for education intervention. The results were so positive that the material was distributed to other districts and regions of the country.

**Peru**

A guide for eliminating student exclusion

Helping students find their bearings regarding the prospect of higher learning means providing them with the tools to build their educational future based on their capabilities, skills and personal aspirations, but also based on the educational alternatives available to them and current labour market demand and trends.

That is the objective of the *Guía de Orientación de Estudios* (Study Orientation Guide), developed in 2009 by Peru’s National...
Youth Secretariat, under the Ministry of Education, with technical support from UNESCO. A comprehensive research initiative provided the basis for the publication, which gives youth information no other documents have systematised. In the future, it will be shared electronically so that it can be updated regularly, maintaining its pertinence.

**Latin America**

**Second-chance educational experiences**

Many countries of the region have introduced innovative educational experiences that give a second chance to adolescents, youth, and adults who have left the school system without completing mandatory education goals. Commonly, such experiences combine primary or secondary schooling with job-training programmes.

In 2008, the Innovemos Network, coordinated by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, undertook a series of research projects to document and share these experiences. Researchers from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Uruguay participated. The joint effort was consolidated in a publication on second chance educational experiences, with lessons from innovative practice in Latin America (*Experiencias educativas de segunda oportunidad. Lecciones desde la práctica innovadora en América Latina*).


**Costa Rica**

**A window of hope for migrant youth**

The “Ventana de migración, empleo y juventud” (“Window of migration, employment and youth) provides help to young people aged 14 to 34 from migrant populations who are exposed to domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, poverty or school exclusion. The programme offers services that permit youth to continue their education. Young people who want to return to school have the possibility of doing so, while others who are not interested in resuming their studies can opt for vocational training to enable them to work and live with dignity.

UNESCO proposes activities and contributes technical knowledge to this initiative, in conjunction with all United Nations agencies and international support, in order to ensure the success of the programme.

**Uruguay**

**Bridges back to school**

To enable adolescents and youth who have dropped out of the formal school system to resume their education, UNESCO Montevideo works in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Development to create formal and informal “bridge” experiences through the Community Classrooms Programme (Programa Aulas Comunitarias, or PAC, its Spanish acronym) and the National Education and Employment Programme (Programa Nacional de Educación y Trabajo, or PNET, its Spanish acronym).
The PAC proposes various strategies for reinsertion based on the profile of the adolescent: courses that last a semester rather than a year on basic content related to various curriculum subjects, visits to secondary schools, assistance developing learning strategies (learning to learn), accompanying students once they complete the PAC and workshops on various topics to develop communicational skills. The PAC encourages de-standardised educational proposals and, consequently, various possible routes to learning, while personalising the connections between adolescents and reference adults (teachers, educators, coordinators).

The PAC is a public-private sector articulation initiative. Public institutions take charge of programme administration, evaluation and monitoring and also provide teachers for the various subjects. On the private sector level, each community classroom is managed by a civil society organization that coordinates, manages, and contributes social technology for workshops on different subjects, while also providing personalised attention to individuals and groups of youth.

The PAC was first implemented in Uruguay in 2007 with 12 classrooms in four provinces. By 2009 it had increased to 18 classrooms in six provinces. Each classroom has between 35 and 48 students.

The National Education and Employment Programme (PNET) strives to reincorporate young people into formal education through non-conventional, informal education centres called Training and Production Education Centres (Centros Educativos de Capacitación y Producción). In these Centres, young people participate in a wide range of workshops that cover seven thematic areas: educational reference (attention for individuals and as group); basic knowledge; computer; artistic expressions; professional preparation; job training; and physical education, recreation and sports. The training programme is organized in semesters and lasts two years.

PNET seeks to develop integral and flexible curriculum that reopen the academic project abandoned midstream by participating adolescents and youth by means of gradual, personalised experiences that produce results in the short term, so as to reconstruct and reaffirm positive self-esteem. The work component culminates with an internship in a public institution or a private firm.

Two centres existed in 2005-2006. By 2009 they had expanded to ten, in nine departments of the country that serve 1200 adolescents and youth between ages 14 and 17. The PNET operates with financial support from the Japan Fund.

Haiti

Literacy Initiative for Empowerment

Nearly 55% of Haiti’s population is illiterate. In an effort to help overcome this problem, since 2007, UNESCO has supported the State Secretariat for Literacy (SEA). SEA is a division of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training that aims to reduce illiteracy rates and promote professional skills among youth from two communities in the Southeast department. The project also seeks to strengthen local SEA capacities to contribute to the development of strategies to reduce illiteracy in Haiti.

Approximately 5,000 youth have benefitted from the project, which employs innovative teaching methods to strengthen literacy skills among youth. Reading and writing activities have been included in professional training sessions and in courses on how to create and maintain vegetable gardens.

The SEA project is supported by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and implemented under the framework of LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment), a global campaign UNESCO launched in 2005 to overcome illiteracy worldwide.

Brazil

Social mobilisation and fundraising for the rights of children and youth

UNESCO and the Brazilian television station Globo TV have joined forces to foster the rights of children and youth through
a campaign consisting of social mobilisation and fundraising, called “childhood hope” (Criança Esperança).

Its aim is to promote human development, quality education, and guarantee the human rights of socially vulnerable populations. Since its inception 25 years ago, the campaign has collected US$78 million. This sum has been fundamental in funding 5000 social programmes run by local NGOs that benefit 4 million children, adolescents and youth by raising their quality of life, reducing infant mortality and child labour, fighting sexual exploitation of minors, and preparing young people to enter the labour market and live in a dignified way.

Globo TV broadcasts information on the rights of children and youth through on-site press reports conducted by the NGOs. During many years UNESCO has contributed knowledge and material development regarding Education for All sports, culture and social integration. It also supervises the project selection process and provides financial and technical backing.

The efforts to raise awareness about these rights persuaded Brazilian officials to incorporate minors’ rights as article 227 of the Federal Constitution and adopt the Statute of the Child and Adolescent.


**Latin America**

**Emerging donors for education**

In Latin America and the Caribbean an increasing number of middle-income countries have made notable progress in terms of human, social, and economic development, and have emerged as donors and partners in regional development. Bilateral intervention and South-South cooperation have also increased, thanks to sub-regional mechanisms that integrate joint-development programmes.

In light of these factors and the international financial crisis, which threatens to undermine the progress achieved towards Education for All (EFA), OREALC/UNESCO Santiago organized a round table on emerging donors in education in Latin America and the Caribbean. During this conference, held in December 2009 in Mexico City, international experts proposed innovative funding mechanisms and planned how to mobilise a coordinated, expanded participation by emerging donors in education. According to the conclusions of representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela who participated in the conference, a common plan of action and a regional perspective are key elements for mobilising action. In this way, regional emerging donors can share the benefits that positioning education at the centre of the national agenda and investing in educational systems has provided them, in order to ensure that all youth in the region have access to quality education and its benefits.
EDUCATION FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

Introduction

The notion of a culture of peace emerged at the end of World War II with the creation of UNESCO. The Organization was founded to build peace in the minds of people by fostering knowledge. Since then, the United Nations has reaffirmed the concept of a culture of peace through countless resolutions and declarations subscribed by nations.

Initially, the concept was approached from the perspective of defining a culture of peace as the absence of violence, until subsequent definitions equated it with the protection of human rights. At the present day, a culture of peace is understood to represent a set of values, attitudes, ways of life, and behaviours in which respect and tolerance for others prevails, and conflicts are resolved through dialogue and negotiation, rather than violence.

Building a culture of peace and learning to live together is the responsibility of everyone, and education is the principal means by which this goal can be achieved. For this to become reality, nations must develop social-emotional and ethical values, attitudes and skills that sustain social coexistence in which everyone participates, shares and develops fully. It also requires education capable of meaningfully including a wide range of students who have traditionally been excluded. Schools must take into account these once-marginalised students and accept responsibility for their development 14.

School coexistence teaches conduct and attitudes that subsequently are reproduced during a lifetime. Schools must be the arena for building a culture of peace, where no one is excluded. These values and an atmosphere of positive coexistence should be reflected in student participation, learning-teaching processes, and in every sphere of the school, including its mission.

Regional Overview

Central America is the most violent region of the world. With the exception of war zones, the murder rates are the highest on the planet, and murder is the leading cause of death among male youth in several countries of the sub-region 15. Violent crimes are committed at increasingly younger ages and the victims are also younger.

According to the "Map of violence: youth of Latin America and the Caribbean" 16, the youth murder rate in Latin America is twice that of Africa, three times or four times the rate in North America and significantly higher than in Europe. The probability that a young person in Latin American will die at the hands of another is thirty times greater than in Europe and seventy times greater than in Greece, Hungary, England, Austria, Japan, or Ireland. This situation signals the pressing need for policies that address the causes of this escalation of violence in which youth are both victims and protagonists.

According to the United Nations Development Programme's Report on Human Development in Central America 2009-2010 17, the sub-region spends 7.7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on security. This is an indication of the influence violence exerts upon decisions people make daily and how it impedes human development.

Violence is also reflected to an equal or lesser degree at the school. Educational establishments must be places where students feel safe, but in Latin America and the Caribbean, it is increasingly difficult to guarantee students a peaceful environment, despite the wishes of teaching staff and school directors. This directly affects schools: if the school becomes a hostile place, absenteeism and desertion rise.

In the Central American region, gangs, known as maras, cause severe problems for school coexistence. In Andean countries, crime and violence rates demonstrate

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the importance of intervention. Officials affirm that the single most important factor affecting youth of both sexes is poverty, while male youth believe it is unemployment and young women perceive domestic violence as the most pressing issue.

Notwithstanding the problems that afflict the region, policies of prevention should offer long-term solutions. The challenge is to bring together all actors and maintain a connection to the problems that affect youth, listening to them, preventing, conducting educational actions, improving employment and giving young people a second chance socially and in terms of education. UNESCO believes that the best options are preventative, long before criminal acts occur, fostering non-violent actions and alternative avenues beginning in primary school.

UNESCO's commitment to education for peace and non-violence

The school is the place where the roots of violence can be stamped out, where the values and principles of peace can be sown. It is the place where diversity begins to be valued and where respect for others ushers in citizen coexistence and social justice. As the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states in Article 3: “Cultural diversity widens the range of options open to everyone; it is one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence”.

UNESCO also embraces the goals of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) and supports educational policies that endorse dialogue on diversity, foster respect for others, and consolidate knowledge for a culture of peace. The continent urgently needs this as concern grows over the increased incidence of violence in educational centres.

The Second Intergovernmental Meeting of the Regional Project on Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (PRELAC, Buenos Aires, 2007) affirmed that a quality education for all implies acknowledging the diversity of people and fostering a school environment that cultivates coexistence based on mutual respect and peaceful conflict resolution. PRELAC’s Focus 3 emphasises the importance of changing “the culture of schools to convert them into participatory learning communities”. A harmonious institutional environment that helps develop emotions and interpersonal relationships fosters learning not only among students but also among teachers and students’ families.

UNESCO, then, believes transformation of the school culture must be encouraged so as to build relationships permeated by the daily practice of democratic values. Only by practicing these values can competent, active, and committed citizens be formed, in addition to the achievement of learning for all.
Our actions in the region

UNESCO has developed several lines of action related to the concept of “learning to live together”. These activities have included strengthening the skills of Ministry of Education technical staff; drafting and administering policies, educational programmes and practices for a culture of peace; and strengthening the education leadership skills of teachers, students and parents for coexistence, peace and human rights.

Each year OREALC/UNESCO Santiago organizes a meeting on the Ibero-American cooperation programme for a culture of peace, convening personnel responsible for coexistence policies within the Ministries of Education. The conferences have spurred and consolidated the Ibero-American Programme on Education for Peace, Democratic Coexistence, and Human Rights, through which the Ministers of the region coordinate efforts to identify actions and plan joint-activities on this issue.

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, through the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SERCE, June 2008) published by its Latin American Laboratory for the Evaluation of the Quality of Education (LLECE), confirmed that generating a respectful, protective and positive environment is key to fostering learning. School environment is the educational variable of greatest impact on students’ cognitive achievements. This solid, empirical evidence is a source of inspiration for generating education policy and transforming schools in pursuit of better conditions for teaching and learning.

Gangs (maras) and school violence

UNESCO is working to find practical solutions to the problem of maras in Central American school. Maras are extremely violent youth gangs that take over a territory to extort, charge tolls, control prostitution and drug trafficking, among other criminal activities. Their presence has increased in Mexico, the United States and Central America, where they have even begun threatening schools, which in the past have been territories of peace, education and learning for life.

The promise of easy money and threats, even of death, are the mechanisms for recruiting adolescents and young boys as young as 13 years old to utilise them in drug trafficking, as minors cannot be jailed. They invade schools as if they were battlefields of rival gangs, igniting fights between classes or within the school itself. Frequently officials are unable to establish respect for rules; in fact, the maras even threaten teachers and directors. This climate of violence compels families to send their children to other schools, leaving students from lower-income families exposed to violence in these establishments.

This situation prompted the governments of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Mexico to turn to UNESCO for advice regarding how to strengthen their schools and respond to the menace these gangs represent. The Organization created a working group, comprised of education, social sciences, culture, communication and information experts whose initial trip was to El Salvador to identify causes of youth violence and interview the various actors. Subsequently, UNESCO proposed a pilot project on youth development and the prevention of violence in El Salvador (Desarrollo Juvenil y Prevención de la violencia en El Salvador) that lasted two-and-a-half years.

“The success of this first programme led to a similar project in Nicaragua from 2008 to 2009 and then a third in Honduras that, due to the internal difficulties in the country during 2010, has been suspended. Within the same series, a fourth project has begun in the Dominican Republic”, says Teresita Escotto, social and human sciences specialist for UNESCO’s office in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The four projects train teachers and school directors in the prevention and management of conflicts for at-risk youth. Workshops on a culture of peace and tolerance were organized in El Salvador, while street theatre was held and sports monitors trained in Nicaragua. Youth also participated in communications workshops, producing television and radio shows, and developed micro-business skills through the creation of business plans. After the success of a similar activity in Brazil, Honduran schools opened on the weekends for all youth and other members of the community to enjoy recreational, computer and training activities.

The primary objective of these activities is to offer youth spaces and opportunities for productive or social insertion that keep them away from gangs. While these projects were underway from 2007 to 2009, two sub-regional forums for Ministry of Education decision-makers were held in

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San Jose, Costa Rica. “The idea is to foster a preventive focus from governments, showing them that good practices yield results in the medium and long-term, and that repression only generates more violence”, explains Teresita Escotto.

The violence of maras in schools is a problem limited to certain areas of cities, not a phenomenon that affects entire urban areas. Therefore, there are no regional or national policies that respond to the situation, considerably weakening the response of vulnerable schools that require more resources than others. “If policies that target gangs fail to take hold, silence will prevail and the gangs will continue to spread. This affects the poorest students in a discriminatory fashion”, states Alfredo Rojas. In response to the situation, in 2006, El Salvador invested in the creation of youth workshops and clubs, hired specialists in psychology and other social fields.

UNESCO also verified that institutional weaknesses of certain communities hinder a forceful response: when gangs are stronger than the police, or the judiciary cannot act quickly, schools lack effective support. This points to the importance of developing cooperation between police and schools, as occurred in El Salvador, where police prevention programmes and backing for education officials are vital.

Schools that are able to build this type of collective response have greater possibilities of success in confronting gangs and become a sanctuary of peace. When school directors win respect from the gangs, the maras back off or their presence in the schools is diminished. Such schools are capable of forging excellent relations with governmental agencies or civil society, such as police, NGOs, churches, and sports clubs. Directors and teachers at these schools are even able to negotiate to a certain extent with mara members, as they learn how to transmit their own authority and communications capability.

This experience allowed UNESCO to deduce principles that are systematised in a model in the digital publication Construyendo autoridad moral desde las aulas. Reflexiones y propuestas para la acción.

El Salvador’s “Effective and Supportive Schools Programme”

In 2006, UNESCO was invited to collaborate with the government of El Salvador to contribute to the “strengthening of schools’ ability to handle such situations”, explains Alfredo Rojas, coordinator of the school leadership network at OREALC/UNESCO Santiago.

The maras affect the entire school. They take over areas such as the bathrooms or land adjacent to the school or the playing fields. Therefore, they challenge school authority and governance. Consequently, UNESCO’s role has been to introduce renewed governance and differential responses from educational establishments. Coexistence becomes a responsibility of the entire school organization, and the collective response must be a commitment shared by all to uphold the school’s moral authority. This enables the definition of degrees of responses as required by the situation: first responses by classroom teachers; second from teachers in charge of groups; then by inspectors, the personnel responsible for discipline and coexistence; and lastly, specialised staff such as guidance counsellors and psychologists.

A positive environment transforms schools into ideal places for teaching and learning.
INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES

Chile

Campaign against bullying

In the past three years school violence in the form of bullying has risen 16% in Chile, according to reports by the country’s Investigative Police, the Public Prosecutor and the Ministry of Education.

In May 2010 the Ministry of Education publicly acknowledged the problem, indicating that the climate within schools had deteriorated to such an extent that, according to UN statistics, Chile now ranks seventh among countries for the incidence of this type of aggression. During 2007, 425 cases were reported, 644 in 2008, and 707 in 2009.

Such extensive denunciations spurred officials to launch the “No more bullying” campaign, developed by the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, the Public Prosecutor and Investigative Police. The campaign aims to encourage minors victimised by the aggression of their classmates and witnesses to denounce these acts to family and teachers.

Investigative Police of Chile will hold prevention talks in educational establishments to address the positive effects of coexistence, alternatives for eradicating violence through training for prevention, and the impact of physical, psychological, verbal, gestural, and sexual violence against a classmate.

The Autonomous University of Barcelona, Chile’s Universidad del Desarrollo (University for Development), and the Chilean Police developed a questionnaire that explores the problem of peer mistreatment through abuse of power. This is a tool intended for students from 7th grade to the last year of secondary school, the period in which the majority of bullying cases occur.

Further, the Investigative Police will produce a geographical reference map to pinpoint the schools where student bullying is most prevalent, and to strengthen mediation in those schools. The Ministry of Education also will set up a telephone hotline to receive denunciations.

OREALC/UNESCO Santiago is supporting the Ministry of Education in the development and validation of instruments to assess school coexistence.

Uruguay

Campamentos educativos para aprender a vivir juntos

In the educational camps programme, students from rural schools (secondary schools, integrated centres, alternating agricultural schools and professional training) live with their teachers and enjoy recreational activities for three days and two nights during the summer. They participate in educational activities in a dynamic, recreational setting with people from different parts of the country, becoming acquainted with other realities and learning to live together.

The camps began in 2009 with 8500 children, adolescents and youth, accompanied by more than 1000 teachers (51% of Uruguay’s rural school population). The programme expects to reach the remaining 49% in the next session of summer camps slated for late 2010, in addition to incorporating students from teacher training institutes who will conduct educational exercises in the camps.

An initiative of the National Public Education Administration and administered by a Coordinating Committee (comprised...
of the Primary Education Council, the Secondary Education Council, and the Technical Professional Education Council), the programme also involves civil society organizations and staff. UNESCO Montevideo also contributes technical advice in designing and administering the programmes, support in sharing the reflections among the various actors involved and the qualitative evaluation of the project. The experience led to the creation of a publication called *Moviendo un País* (Moving a Country).


**Brazil**

**Open schools, a public policy**

According to research conducted by UNESCO from 1997 to 2000, the majority of violent deaths in Brazil occur during the weekend and primarily affect youth. This creates a difficult school environment: many students begin to dropout of school and teachers feel insecure and ineffective in dealing with the situation.

In 2000, in the Framework of the International Year for a Culture of Peace, UNESCO launched the programme “Open Schools: education and culture for peace”.

The idea is to contribute social assistance to particularly vulnerable communities by opening public schools on weekends to encourage cultural, sports, entertainment and educational activities. The result was very positive in Brazil. The rate of violence declined dramatically during weekends, to such an extent that in 2004, the Brazilian federal government and UNESCO launched the programme “Open Schools: education, culture, sport and work”. Today the project opens 5000 schools every weekend throughout the country. UNESCO has signalled the experience as a low-cost initiative other countries can easily replicate. As of 2010, the project has been replicated in Argentina, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador.


**Guatemala**

**Combating violence through youth entrepreneurship**

In the framework of violence prevention for youth, the ReteJoven Project is carried out by UNESCO Guatemala with funding from the Italian Development Cooperation in municipalities of the country’s northeast region. The project consists of 4 areas of action: citizen participation; social communication; entrepreneurship; and the creation of an Observatory on Youth and Development.

The entrepreneurship component proposes developing entrepreneur capabilities and attitudes in youth, providing them with the tools and conditions they need to create new companies, jobs and sources of income to improve their quality of life.

The programme is guided by a strategic vision of local economic development that seeks to involve local institutions and government as well as civil society organizations that champion the interests of youth. The results include the training of 163

Photo: © UNESCO Brasilia. The Open Schools Programme led to a dramatic decline in violence during weekends.
young people in the methodology for designing business plans; 51 business plans designed with the participation of 63 people; the establishment of 14 new micro-businesses which have created 35 new direct jobs and 50 indirect jobs in the formal sector; and the creation of an alliance with the Vice Minister's Office for Development of Micro, Small and Medium-sized Businesses to provide follow-up of the new businesses.

The Youth and Development Observatory, established by UNESCO with various partners and housed by the Rafael Landívar University of Guatemala, will produce specialised information and indicators on youth. These data will be shared with decision makers to enable them to develop quality public policy on youth. The Observatory also will promote research by youth on youth and the creation of youth networks. This experience will serve as point of departure for expanding the scope of action to the sub-region through the creation of a Central American Youth Observatory.

http://www.miradorjoven.org

**Haiti**

**Conflict prevention and social cohesion for Haitian youth**

UNESCO and a group of UN partner-agencies are implementing a project on “Conflict Prevention and Social Cohesion in Haiti through local community empowerment and institutional capacity building” (CPSC). The project targets youth in five regional departments and addresses a persisting sense of uncertainty in semi-urban and rural communities in Haiti, a situation that can trigger renewed violence and undermine social and economic recovery and reconstruction after the deadly earthquake that hit the country at the beginning of 2010.

CPSC activities include investing in development of an independent National Violence Observatory to undertake national surveillance capacities, reinforcing legitimate community-based authority structures and generating violence prevention plans through participatory and locally driven partnerships.

UNESCO’s key actions contribute to the identification of the sources and the drivers of violence among youth in the respective communities in order to promote reflection at academic and community levels and to support decision-making and government policies on these issues. UNESCO also develops media tools to increase people’s awareness on violence issues, organizes academic and social forums and implements trainings with teachers and local youth leaders enabling them to promote social cohesion in formal education and at the community level.

Implemented in cooperation with UNFPA, IOM, UNDP and UNIFEM, the programme will have a two-year duration.
SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND HIV PREVENTION

Introduction

Comprehensive sexuality education aims to equip boys, girls and youth with the knowledge, competencies, and values to enable them to act responsibly and enjoy their sexual and social life in a world affected by HIV and AIDS. It is one of the most complex issues to address in many countries of the world, including countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, because of the diversity of perspectives on the topic that often translate into obstacles that impede its incorporation into formal education curriculum.

In Latin America and the Caribbean few young people receive adequate preparation for sexual life, increasing their vulnerability to pressure, abuse, exploitation, violence, unplanned pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (STD), including HIV. According to the UNAIDS 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, less than 40% of youth between ages 15 and 24 are correctly informed about HIV and the various forms of transmission and prevention. This is even more dramatic in light of the fact that an estimated 45% of new HIV cases throughout the world affect youth.

It has been shown that when planned actions drawn from scientific evidence are carried out to prepare youth for an active sexual life, knowledge is increased, aptitudes are developed, positive activities are generated and high-risk sexual conduct is reduced or modified. Sexuality education approached from a comprehensive focus that highlights HIV prevention is associated with a later initiation of sexual activity, a decline in the number of sexual partners, and the reduction of other risky sexual practices. It also helps foster better attitudes regarding individuals living with HIV, and can reduce both stigma and discriminatory practices. Lastly, education is a very cost-effective means of preventing HIV: boys, girls and youth in school have less probability of contracting HIV than those who do not go to school, even when curriculums do not address the issue of HIV and AIDS.

The primary goal of sexuality education is to equip boys, girls, and young people with the knowledge, competency, and values needed to enable them to take responsibility for their sexual and social life. Sexuality education programmes tend to be mutually reinforcing: they enrich knowledge and understanding; counteract erroneous information; explain and clarify feeling, values, and attitudes; develop or strengthen competencies; foster and sustain conduct that tends to reduce risk and encourage the full exercise of a healthy, responsible, and pleasurable sexuality; clarify and consolidate values and attitudes based on human rights; improve perception of the rules that govern peer groups; and increase meaningful communication with fathers, mothers, and other adults based on trust.

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HIV and AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean

Nearly three decades have elapsed since the HIV and AIDS epidemic first appeared. Statistics indicate that by late 2008, some 33.4 million people were living with the virus. An estimated 40% were young people between ages 15 and 24. An estimated 370,000 children under 15 contracted the virus in 2007. In nearly every region of the world, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV disproportionately affects men who have sexual relations with other men, users of injected drugs, and sex professionals.

During the same period in Latin America and the Caribbean, an estimated 2,200,000 people were living with HIV, and during 2008, another 190,000 became infected with the virus.

The Caribbean ranks second among the regions of the world with the greatest prevalence of adults with HIV, and AIDS is one of the leading causes of death among people between ages 15 and 44. Regionally, the epidemic is increasingly affecting women. In the Caribbean women represent nearly 50% of all cases reported and the prevalence of HIV is especially high among adolescent women, who tend to have significantly higher rates than males of the same age.

In Latin America, however, the number of men who live with HIV is substantially higher than women, mainly because one of the major means of transmission is through sexual relations with other men without a correct and constant use of condoms or other prophylactics.

Some factors such as poverty, social inequality, violence, and political instability continue to affect the most vulnerable segments of the population at higher risk of acquiring HIV, such as women, particularly the youngest women, men who have sex with other men, and sexual workers.

Throughout the region topics related to sexuality, especially if they are outside the dominant heterosexual norm such as homosexuality and bisexuality, are cultural taboos that sometimes evoke great repudiation from certain sectors of the population. In some countries sexual relations between persons of the same sex is even a crime. Homophobia, or the rejection of individuals who do not conform to the heterosexual model; stigma; and discrimination have led many people to lead double lives - especially men who are sexually attracted to other men while married to a woman and have a “traditional” family – in order to prevent exclusion and violence in their family settings. Consequently, many married women or those with a stable sexual partner have acquired HIV in this way.

Mary Guinn Delaney, regional HIV/AIDS specialist for OREALC/UNESCO Santiago, believes comprehensive sexuality education is the best way to broach these topics in a safe environment, such as the school. UNESCO considers it an ethical issue, related to the right of young people to have access to information and quality education. Sexuality education must be complemented by access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services that include HIV prevention. In this way, the right to HIV prevention from a comprehensive perspective can be guaranteed.

The UNAIDS publication Perspectives (2010) describes a trend that signals a decline in HIV prevalence among youth in a significant number of the most affected African countries, after years of steady growth. These figures are no coincidence. This trend reflects changes in patterns of sexual conduct, which represent fundamental progress in altering the course of the AIDS epidemic. Providing information and access to sexual and reproductive health services does not suffice if these strategies do not lead to concrete changes in sexual conduct that reduce risk and vulnerability to HIV.

Latin America has exercised strong leadership in the treatment and prevention of HIV. Treatment is increasingly accessible in the region, but the key to curbing new infections

26 UNAIDS (2010). Ten million deaths and 1 million new HIV infections could be averted if countries meet HIV treatment targets


continues to be prevention and education. UNESCO focuses special attention on these two factors, particularly for sectors of the population that are vulnerable to HIV, such as youth.

**UNESCO’s commitment to HIV prevention**

UNESCO is convinced that education contributes to the acquisition of knowledge and personal skills that are essential in preventing HIV and in mitigating the effects of AIDS. Furthermore, education helps overcome the conditions that facilitate the spread of the virus, such as poverty, ill health, and mistreatment, particularly against girls and women. Education can also create understanding and tolerance to foster a lessening of the stigma and discrimination against people with HIV.

UNESCO has performed a pivotal role in the Global Initiative on Education and HIV & AIDS (EDUSIDA), an entity that aspires to promote, develop and support global responses to the pandemic from the arena of education. It also has had notable participation in the Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Education, which strives to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support programmes. UNAIDS consists of various United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, WFP, UNODC, WHO, ILO, UNFPA and UNESCO) and the World Bank, which joined forces to work in more than 75 countries.

"In the past nine years there has been a real political and financial mobilisation regarding HIV internationally", states Mary Guinn Delaney. This mobilisation channelled US$16,000 million in 2009. “It is a significant and unprecedented amount, especially, considering that 10 or 15 years ago funding for a global response to the epidemic was scarce. Each country attempted to handle the problem locally but what really changed the thrust of the fight against the epidemic has been the mobilisation of government responses and international cooperation”, she explains.

The United Nations decided to assign a specific role to each agency that participates in UNAIDS and its respective funds. UNESCO’s mandate on the issue is to provide a technical response to HIV through formal education. The close ties UNESCO has forged with Ministries of Education throughout the world since its inception, and its advisory role in programme development facilitate this important commitment.

Of the US$12 million UNAIDS channels to UNESCO to fund HIV prevention work, Latin America and the Caribbean receive close to US$1.5 million. “We also receive funds from OPEC, the French Bruni-Tedeschi Foundation, and donations from countries such as Japan, Italy and the European Union”, Mary Guinn Delaney notes.

**Our actions in the region**

UNESCO supports Member States through their Ministries of Education to implement HIV prevention programmes in schools; disseminate knowledge and information; develop materials, support teacher training to respond to students and provide them with information; and it helps promote the best practices of countries that have produced positive results.

UNESCO also develops materials to approach the issue of sexuality education and HIV prevention in a simple manner regionally. It provides individual advice and proposals for ministries of each country. In this regard, UNESCO has proposed a set of global guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education that seeks to serve as key tools for contributing better universal access to knowledge and skill development processes to fully enjoy one’s personal, social, emotional and sexual life.

The International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education was developed to assist education and health authorities as well as other government officials involved in the development and implementation of sexuality education programmes and materials for the school system. The publication consists of two volumes (methodology and pedagogy objectives) and draws upon the analysis of 89 studies on the effectiveness of sexuality education programmes in the United States, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. Mary Guinn Delaney explains: “We

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evaluated criteria regarding what worked well in those programmes, the behaviour of people who had participated, and the content in order to establish standardised sexual education programmes that can be understood by different age groups ranging from 5 to 18 years of age”, she explained. “The objective is that youth become subjects with rights; not objects of prevention”.

This tool, as well as international accords all States have signed, ratified and approved on the right to sexuality education, enable UNESCO to offer countries orientations and cost estimates of what a preventive programme might entail. “Today’s youth must be aware that while they learn to enjoy their sexuality they also need to consider the dangers they must avoid. HIV is one of them”, Mary Guinn Delaney concluded.
Preventing through Education: The Ministerial Meeting of Mexico 2008

In August 2008, the XVII International Conference on AIDS convened 25,000 people from all over the world in Mexico. The event marked an important change in the approach to the epidemic, which had focused on prevention and treatment.

The Conference was historic from more than one standpoint. It was the first to be held in a country of Latin America, and speakers included representatives from the most vulnerable segments of the population. Moreover, the issue of sexual relations between men was debated in a plenary session and the problems of stigmatisation and discrimination were squarely addressed, as well as the importance of a commitment to change that situation.

Prior to the conference, the Government of Mexico convened the Ministers of Health and Education of Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss the role of education in prevention. The meeting’s objective was to reach an agreement and approve a declaration that contained specific commitments for reinforcing collaboration between health and education in each country, with significant weight assigned to the response from education in HIV prevention.

This was accompanied by the adoption of technical commitments regarding the need to give greater priority to the prevention of new HIV infections by facilitating access to treatment and prevention, given that for every 2000 patients who begin treatment each day, another 7000 become infected with HIV.

The Declaration of Mexico put objectives in writing. Most ministers pledged to review their countries’ programmes, teacher training curriculum, and national laws. For example, some countries had to consider the contradiction of incorporating the issue of sexual diversity in school curriculum while sodomy and homosexuality continued to be outlawed. This is not an isolated issue: homosexuality is illegal in eleven countries of the region, mostly located in the Caribbean.

First Meeting of Ministers of Health and Education to stop HIV and STIs in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008) Ministerial Declaration Preventing through Education

INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES

Argentina
Tapping the potential of television to prevent HIV/AIDS

Every day 400 people in Latin America become infected with HIV. How can we employ television in response to this epidemic? How can media generate a response, moving beyond the role of mere transmitters of information generated by other actors?

Kofi Annan posed these questions while serving as Secretary General of the United Nations. This challenge has resulted in several new endeavours since 2009, including the Latin American Media Initiative on AIDS (www.imlasida.org).

Headed by the Huésped Foundation based in Buenos Aires (Argentina) with financial support from the Kaiser Family Foundation, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago and other donors, this initiative consists of three lines of action. The first is a regional campaign called “passion for life” (Pasión por la vida) that was launched in October 2009 in Latin America and disseminated by social networks and other new digital media.

This campaign presented documentary testimony of people living with the virus throughout the continent “with the aim of creating visibility for this epidemic that is highly invisible in the region”, explains Leandro Cahn, Communications and Resource Development Director for the Huésped Foundation. The message is that “people who have HIV live their lives, have passions, interests and do all this in addition to living with the virus, not the other way around”. The campaign demonstrates that we are all exposed to HIV and that a response to the epidemic requires the commitment of everyone.

The campaign’s second facet involved training journalists as well as television series screenwriters to include HIV related subjects in their productions. The Kaiser Family Foundation produced a 100-page guide that explains how to cover news related to HIV with respect for individuals who are infected.

The third element is Huésped Foundation’s work with screenwriters to harness the power of fiction to change people’s behaviour. The Foundation is working with the Mexican media conglomerate Televisa on content for the popular television series “Las tontas no van al cielo”; in Argentina on a series and a work of fiction that were shown on channel 13; in Peru on a programme similar to the “Grey’s Anatomy” produced in the United States; in Colombia in conjunction with Fox TV; and with several television stations in Ecuador. “Our idea is to demonstrate that the issue of HIV can be worked into the classic soap opera format without diminishing its storyline and entertainment value”, explains Leandro Cahn.

The Huésped Foundation also produces its own 50-minute work of fiction each year. “This is distributed, with no rights reserved, to every television channel in the region interested in transmitting it”, Cahn noted. The programme it produced in 2009 is called “Revelaciones” and deals with workplace discrimination due to HIV.

Viewed by millions, the series is “a new vehicle for education”, concludes Leandro Cahn. For example, a two-minute story on

Manual for health educators. The Huésped Foundation has contributed to the fight against HIV and AIDS through innovative materials and instruments.
prevention of HIV transmission from the mother to the child during pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding was introduced in a chapter of Grey’s Anatomy. Viewers were surveyed to measure their level of knowledge about the possibility of avoiding HIV transmission before the episode aired, one week later, and then 6 weeks later. It rose from 15% to 61% and then stabilised at 45%. With just two minutes of a 48-minute episode seen by more than 17 million people, the level of awareness was far greater than could ever be expected with a traditional prevention campaign.

Regional “Pasion por la Vida” campaign (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tm8AwAyqHX8

Cuba
SIDACULT: Teaching HIV prevention through culture

Limited awareness regarding the risk of infection spurs the advance of HIV. Consequently, prevention work is more important than ever. UNESCO Havana’s regional SIDACULT programme developed HIV prevention strategies from a social and cultural approach. This includes various types of theatre (with the emphasis on improvisational theatre); short films; visual arts; literature; street art and countless other cultural expressions. These activities are not necessarily carried out in the setting of the school but they can serve as important educational material when incorporated into the classroom work, a strategy employed in Cuba, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and Colombia.

In Aphrodite Centre, a beauty salon in Havana, “the people who work there, the hairdressers, can become health promoters. UNESCO provides them with training and provides them with information about the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS with the goal that they share this information with the young women who go there for a haircut or to paint their nails...” explained Miguel Llivina, education programme officer for UNESCO’s office in Havana.

The beauty parlour also is capable of crossing territorial borders and offering its services in street fairs, such as it did in the El Cerro municipality, known as one of the areas of greatest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Havana. Under an umbrella, in the midst of stands selling food, books and crafts, Aphrodite’s beauticians provided information to young people who are at greater risk of contagion.

Another project is being conducted in three Havana municipalities with a high population density, a significant prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and many faithful of Yoruba, an Afro-Cuban religion with a great following in Cuba. In order to provide information concerning HIV/AIDS prevention, a training programme was held for religious leaders, who became teachers. When their congregations turn to them for advice, they share information on how to prevent HIV infection.

Mexico
Training teachers in HIV/AIDS prevention from a human rights perspective

To fulfil the commitments made during the World Conference on AIDS, held in Mexico in 2008, UNESCO’s office in Mexico and the Mexican Public Education Secretary are designing a HIV prevention training campaign for teachers, incorporating a gender and human rights focus.

The idea is to train teachers who work in public and private schools with primary and secondary school students (ages 11-
18) to learn how to respond in a comprehensive manner to the questions that youth pose. In this way they spread awareness and respect for the rights of people who live with HIV, so that they and their families can acquire the understanding and skills needed to successfully prevent transmission of HIV, as well as other sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

**Ecuador**

**HIV prevention in border regions**

Due to the substantial increase in the number of people living with HIV, in 2005 the Government of Ecuador launched the National Programme for the Control and Prevention of HIV in collaboration with UNAIDS and technical support from UNESCO Quito. The border areas Ecuador shares with Peru and Colombia are considered zones of high social vulnerability, which increases the risk of HIV infection among adolescents and youth. For this reason the border zones were chosen as priority places for intervention.

In the framework of the “cultural appropriations for HIV prevention in border zones” project (apropiaciones culturales para la prevención del VIH en zonas de frontera), UNESCO organized training sessions for teachers, education students, and other students that employ dynamic, entertaining methodology that takes into account the cultural diversity of the target population and the specific sensibilities of youth culture. Training content goes beyond the topic of HIV to address issues related to gender, self-esteem, and conflict prevention, highlighting the role that dialogue plays in the integration of neighbours who live along the border. Workshops based on dialogue between teachers and students not only foster change in conduct, but also generate local capacities for collective development of HIV prevention projects in educational institutions.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxoMIq2cXCc

**Brazil**

**Innovations in HIV prevention**

In Brazil, 70% of the people who live with HIV are youth and adults between ages 20 and 39. Many acquired the virus as adolescents. The Brazilian government implemented several non-formal preventive education programmes to address the situation. The education sector in conjunction with other sectors developed the strategy. UNESCO Brasilia works closely with the National AIDS Programme, the Ministries of Education and Health and other United Nations agencies (UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA) on programmes such as “School Award – Incentive to Prevention STIs/AIDS and Drug Use” and “Health and Prevention in Schools”. Support from UNFPA facilitated the development of preventive health and reproductive health curriculum for public schools.

Not long ago, UNESCO Brasilia and associates, with funding from UNAIDS, produced a series of comic books that incorporate HIV prevention, prevention of teenage pregnancy, and how to address homophobia in the schools. These comic books will be important tools for sexuality education classes. A user’s guide for teachers on CD-ROM will explain how to organize discussions around the comics, a modern and novel concept for approaching issues related to HIV/AIDS. The Brazilian designer Eddy Barrows (Superman) was one of many well-known artists who contributed their talent to develop the project.

Thanks to such innovative experience Brazilian schools hope to become places where a healthier society can be constructed through comprehensive citizen development.

**Ecuador**

**Educating for sexuality and love**

In 2006, in order to comply with the new law, plan, and National Programme for Education on Sexuality and Love, the Government of Ecuador decided to incorporate sexual education in every educational establishment of the country at the primary and secondary school level.

The programme’s objective is to equip people with the adequate knowledge to exercise their human rights; sexual
and reproductive rights; and the right to equal, respectful and mutually cooperative relations between human beings so that sexuality can become an enriching dimension of one’s personality and social life. The programme defines this goal in the framework of the need to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, as well as teenage pregnancy, and fight all forms of discrimination and sexual exploitation.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education, other governmental agencies, NGOs, UNFPA and UNESCO formed an institutional and working support committee using a multi-sector approach. The Committee has contributed important achievements such as defining comprehensive sexual education and the elimination of violence in the educational system as responsibilities of the State, according to the Constitution of 2008; technical support for the Strategic Multi-sector Plan on HIV in Ecuador; the development of curriculum plans for sexual education at all levels; an Inter-ministry Plan (Education/Health) that guarantees care, protection, and restoration of student rights; and reinforcement of the National Programme for Education on Sexuality and Love (PRONESA) from a rights perspective.

Between 2006 and 2008, more than 30,000 primary and secondary school teachers were trained in comprehensive sexual education and more than 300,000 students of 8,700 schools received sexual education on topics related to sexual and reproductive health.


**Dominican Republic**

Recreational youth camps for sexual education and HIV prevention

Recreational camps outside the city can be used to conduct extracurricular activities and develop values and attitudes among adolescents. In 2007, the Dominican State Secretary of Education, in conjunction with UNESCO Havana, organized a regional youth camp (*Campajure*) to train sixty secondary students from various schools in Pinar Quemado de Jarabacoa on sexuality, gender, and sexually transmitted infection prevention, including HIV.

A comprehensive academic programme featuring different activities was held for a week, enabling the school community to bring their knowledge up-to-date and deepen curriculum content related to tolerance, a culture of peace, diversity, and respect for the other gender.

“Considering the difficulty in speaking openly on the subject of sexual education and the use of birth control in Dominican schools, we can say this youth camp was a model experience”, says Miguel Llivina, education programme officer for UNESCO’s office in Havana. It created youth leadership that will share their knowledge in their respective regions; the camp provided a successful model for organizing new *Campajures* in other schools of the Dominican Republic. It was a point of departure for other HIV and AIDS prevention projects such as “I take care of my life, I take care of yours” (*Cuido mi vida, Cuido tu vida*).

**Panama and Costa Rica**

Websites for youth featuring information on HIV and AIDS

The best way to inform youth is for youth to inform one another. This idea was put into action in Panama and Costa Rica with the creation of web pages that provide information to youth and facilitate the opportunity for educational interaction between peers on sexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention.

UNESCO designed the “sexuality tunnel” (*El túnel de la sexualidad*) ([http://www.cnjpanama.org.pa/tunel.html](http://www.cnjpanama.org.pa/tunel.html)) web
site for the National Youth Council of Panama (CONAJUPA) to provide information on HIV prevention methods in an educational manner for adolescents and young people aged 14 to 34. The initiative is endorsed by CONAJUPA and the Ministries of Education and Health.

In Costa Rica the “Youth for Youth” webpage (jóvenes para jóvenes) (http://www.jovenesparajovenes.com/portal/) is part of the official Public Education Ministry web site. UNESCO supported the ministry project by designing the web site and developing a strategy based on peer teaching and youth leadership training, coupled with training for technical staff who will manage activities on the web site and incorporate them into the school curriculum. These training sessions led to the formation of youth leader units in secondary schools. The web site has become an educational tool.

Experts in the field of sexual and reproductive health manage the two web sites. Both web sites include interactive tools. Youth who have completed the training answer questions posed by other young people about sexuality as well as HIV and AIDS.

Panama
Training youth leaders to be agents of change

The high incidence of HIV/AIDS among youth calls for the encouragement of their full participation in prevention responses by working directly with them.

With this in mind, in 2008 UNESCO San José in Costa Rica implemented the project “Forming human talent in HIV/AIDS prevention from a development focus in skills for life” (Formación del talento humano en prevención del VIH/SIDA desde el enfoque del desarrollo de habilidades para la vida) in vulnerable areas of Panama in collaboration with the NGO Aid for AIDS. Key youth organizations were offered training workshops using the methodology of “How much do you know about HIV/AIDS?” (¿Cuánto sabes del VIH/SIDA?) to train monitors who will replicate the experience in their own communities.

Groups of youth leaders were created in each place. More than 3600 young people were trained to give the workshops in their respective neighbourhoods. The youth leaders became agents of change and strengthened the network of youth that participate in HIV/AIDS prevention.

Dominican Republic
Using theatre to prevent HIV

The Dominican Republic is one country in the Caribbean with a high prevalence of HIV. Many efforts have focused on raising awareness among the population of 15 to 24 year olds, as their conduct will be decisive in shaping the course of the epidemic in the region.

UNESCO believes HIV awareness and prevention are most effective when young people share the educational message with each other. For this reason, in 2009 it supported the Dominican NGO ASOLSIDA (Alianza Solidaria para la Lucha contra el VIH/SIDA) in the project “I take care of my life, I take care of yours” (Cuido mi vida, Cuido tu vida) through the Youth Forever Network in participation with artists in the Cultural Teatro Cayenas Foundation. Through theatre productions (social dramas and monologues written and performed by members of ASOLSIDA), the troupe raised awareness on the risk of contracting HIV, and also demonstrated forms of discrimination that are prevalent and how they can be eradicated.

“For example, one script that arose as a collective creation tells about the life of a young man who has sexual relations without protection, is diagnosed HIV positive, and reflects on his new lifestyle. The group of comedians employs participatory theatre techniques. The spectator enters the stage and becomes part of the production”, explains Miguel Llivina, UNESCO Havana education programme officer.

Six theatre presentations were held in schools in low-income areas. After each presentation, a theatre forum was conducted that clarified any doubts the public might have on the topic of sexual relations and HIV/AIDS addressed in the play. The theatre group also participated in the Group Theatre Biennial. More than 1500 adolescents and youth of both sexes (between ages 13 and 24) directly benefited from this form of HIV prevention and increased their knowledge regarding responsible sexuality.
Introduction

Sustainable development refers to the concept of satisfying present needs without jeopardising those of future generations. To achieve it, humanity must strive to solve social and environmental problems, and learn to live a sustainable lifestyle. The objective of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is to encourage the formation of attitudes and skills, and the acquisition of knowledge that will enable people to make decisions that benefit themselves and others, now and in the future.

To address the dire situations of poverty, violence, inequity, and depletion of natural resources, the UN declared the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014 (DESD). As lead agency of the Decade, UNESCO fosters quality education for all, the indispensable foundation for sustainable development, regionally and nationally. The initiative aims to integrate sustainable development principles, values, and practices in every aspect of education and learning.

Education for Sustainable Development is a wide-ranging instrument for quality learning that integrates essential issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable lifestyles, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility and the protection of indigenous cultures. According to Mark Richmond, Director of the Division for the Coordination of UN Priorities in Education for UNESCO, “ESD is a key means through which education can build a global lobby for effective action, showing people that, as conscious consumers and responsible citizens, their concrete actions can contribute to lasting solutions to such challenges as climate change”.

The four major objectives of the Decade are to facilitate networking and collaboration among stakeholders in ESD; foster greater quality of teaching and learning of environmental topics; support countries in achieving their millennium development goals through ESD efforts; and provide countries with new opportunities and tools to reform education.
Education for Sustainable Development in the region

ESD activities in the region included inaugurating the Decade at the regional and sub-regional levels at the Ibero-American Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in May 2005. Other important venues for promoting the concept of ESD and encouraging its adoption and implementation were the conferences “Education for Sustainable Development: New Strategies for the Future” held in Kingston, Jamaica and “Building Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America”, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, in October 2006.

During the latter meeting, participants drafted a preliminary version of the regional strategy “Building an Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”.

These three meetings spurred the adoption of the Decade in the region and were settings for debate on the scope of ESD and its differences and possible overlaps with environmental education. These discussions continue and are constantly being enriched at national, sub-regional and regional meetings.

Over time, the meaning and scope of the concept have been refined and framed in the context of the realities and particular characteristics of the region. This facilitated an integrated reaction, more favourable to ESD and its Decade. It was in this framework that the Organization of Ibero American States (OIS) launched its “Commitment for Education for Sustainability”.

Regional Initiatives

Two regional instruments have been developed. The first is the regional strategy completed in 2007 and coordinated by the UNESCO Earth Charter, Building an Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. The second is the Latin American and Caribbean Environmental Education Programme in the Framework for Sustainable Development (PLACEA), completed in 2004, coordinated by Venezuela and later by Brazil.

Both promote the Decade and seek to integrate and consolidate public education policy in the framework of sustainable development; establish and strengthen cooperation, networking and communications between different entities and actors in the education system; and achieve a strong educational community through ongoing training, keeping pace with current trends, developing conceptual and methodological aspects of education, and encouraging funding for these initiatives. Both initiatives have also shared similar challenges in their implementation and follow-up.

Sub-regional Initiatives

The Andean Amazonian Environmental Education and Communications Plan (PANACEA) coordinated by Peru with the participation of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, is another example of nations striving to achieve the ESD goals. Its major characteristic is the clarity with which its objectives reflect the needs that must be covered in the sub-region to attain a quality environmental education.

National Initiatives

Few countries of the region have designed policy instruments that explicitly refer to ESD in the context of the Decade. In 2006, Mexico set in motion its Environmental Education for Sustainability Strategy and Chile undertook a National Policy for Education for Sustainable Education in 2008. In addition, El Salvador, Peru and Ecuador developed instruments specifically created within the framework of the Decade that refer to environmental education, its rationale, and objectives.

By 2009 only five countries of the region explicitly reflected the influence of DESD in their instruments. Nevertheless, most Latin American countries have approved one document or another that states its environmental education policy or strategy on the national level, suggesting signs of progress in establishing instruments that guide environmental education processes and sustainable development.

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31 Organized by the Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development (CEBDS) jointly with UNESCO, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), UNEP, the World Bank and the Brazilian government.

32 Organized by the Earth Charter Centre of the University for Peace and UNESCO, with financial support from the Japan Fiduciary Fund for EFA and collaboration from UNEP; the AVINA Group, the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica, the Education and Environment and Natural Resources Secretaries of Mexico, the National University of Costa Rica, the United Nations University for Peace, the Paulo Freire Institute, the Sustainable World Foundation and the Banco da Amazônia.

33 OIS. Commitment to education for sustainable development http://www.oei.es/decada/compromisoen.htm
development. In the Caribbean, nations have yet to attain a similar level of institutional incorporation 34.

Characteristics shared by the national initiatives include the fostering of environmental education and/or sustainable development in educational systems through formal, non-formal and informal education that improves quality of life. The expectation is that these initiatives may become instruments that orient or reorient curriculum proposals proposed by education systems, actions by the State, civil society and individuals in the area of environmental education and sustainable development. Most of the same entities encourage the establishment of commitments and individual, collective, governmental, and non-governmental actions that favour environmental protection and sustainable development.

UNESCO’s commitment to Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO’s role as DESD coordinating organization is to serve as a laboratory of ideas, standard setter, clearing house, capacity-builder and catalyst for international cooperation. UNESCO’s actions address all these components from an intersectoral perspective.

UNESCO coordinates Decade activities in order to stimulate new alliances with the private sector, youth, and the mass media; promotes monitoring and evaluation; serves as a forum for the study of issues related to ESD to involve prominent individuals who are interested in the Decade (private sector representatives, religious organizations, youth associations, indigenous peoples, etc.); conveys model ESD practices; supports and provides assistance to Member States that implement or consider implementing ESD curriculum, policies, and research; organizes flexible workgroups on specific topics; and performs its strategic function in regards to ESD.

In 2009, the fifth year of the Decade, UNESCO distributed surveys to the officials in charge of environmental education and education for sustainable development in each Member State. Additionally, it engaged in research projects to complement the regional reports, convened meetings with key stakeholders; and published studies on policies, plans and programmes that had been developed in the context of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2010).

Results of the Decade evaluation were presented at the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held from 31 March to 2 April 2009 in Bonn, Germany. The Conference convened 700 participants from 150 countries and facilitated the worldwide exchange of good practices of education for sustainable development and enhanced cooperation in the implementation of the DESD.

Photo: © Flickr/ Shira Golding
Providing practical training is one of the main objectives of Education for Sustainable Development.
The Conference led to a second monitoring phase that focused on the training of key actors. A report on these initiatives will be published in 2011 and a final report evaluating the impact and results of the Decade is planned for 2015.

Our actions in the region

Latin America and the Caribbean has a long tradition of environmental education, historically incorporated as part of scientific education which aims to forge a unified regional strategy through coordinated policy, programmes, training and exchange of experiences. “This has made it possible to provide a solid base for Education for Sustainable Development”, notes Astrid Hollander, who is responsible for ESD at OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. She adds, “The idea of ESD is to be a transversal theme, incorporated into all course subjects. An added-value with content”.

UNESCO offers orientation, develops tools, provides platforms for dialogue, and promotes the concept of education for sustainable development that is high quality, transversal and holistic. Striving to meet this challenge, during 2008 OREALC/UNESCO Santiago produced two publications on the issue to motivate reflection, discussion, and the creation of innovative practices that involve the region’s teachers during the Decade in order to build sustainable societies. The government of Japan provided funding for both publications.

- Teacher’s Guide for Education for Sustainable Development in the Caribbean 35 addresses the sub-region’s teachers and teacher-trainers at every level of education. It aims to contribute to the incorporation of education for sustainable development in teaching practices through education initiatives previously implemented in the Caribbean that can be replicated in various classrooms, schools and communities. “This material describes how to employ literature and knowledge to transmit messages that stimulate critical thinking in youth and the capacity to change their behaviour”, explains Hollander. This text demonstrates the results that can be achieved when forces are united to implement shared projects. In this case, the publication reflects the work of experts in UNESCO offices in Santiago and Kingston.

- The second publication on Education for sustainable development in the Andean region, significant experiences in Ecuador and Venezuela 36 (Educación para el desarrollo sostenible en la región andina. Algunas experiencias significativas en Ecuador y Venezuela) compiles experiences in Ecuador and Venezuela that can be replicated in schools and communities to foster education for sustainable development not only in the classroom but also in the community.

In March 2009, OREALC/UNESCO Santiago held the workshop “The role of NGOs in promoting and implementing Education for Sustainable Development in Latin America” in Santiago Chile, with the participation of NGOs from ten countries in the region to establish closer ties, share experiences, present the results of the first phase of monitoring and evaluation of the Decade in the region and consolidate the recommendations of a study on the role of NGOs working on ESD in the region.

The activity was conducted within the framework of the project “Leading the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development - DESD”, funded by the Japanese Government and implemented by OREALC/UNESCO Santiago. The findings culled from this workshop served as input for the preparation of UNESCO’s 2009 World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) held in Bonn, Germany.

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INNOVATIVE EXPERIENCES

Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile
Sub-regional tsunami preparedness project

In 2009 and 2010, UNESCO implemented a project on adaptive learning mechanisms for tsunami preparedness at the community level in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Created in the framework of the Sixth Action Plan for South America of the Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO), it is funded by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO).

The project’s activities include the development and implementation of adaptive learning modules on tsunami risk reduction (school based) for school children and extended school community; development and pilot-testing of disaster risk reduction and response plans at the school level; community evacuation drills; and coordination workshops at the national and regional levels with local emergency response officials and representatives from public and private sectors, NGOs, humanitarian agencies, regional and international organizations, education authorities, and the media.

Chile
Capacity development for sustainable ecotourism and development

UNESCO and Chile signed an agreement on a project to develop the capacities of local communities for sustainable ecotourism in Rapa Nui (Easter Island). The project, which began in May 2009, aims to build the skills needed to develop sustainable ecotourism with a community focus in order to protect local culture and traditions and ensure better resource management. It is being implemented in collaboration with local tourism authorities, and tourism operators.

The project has three components: capacity development for eco-tourism and sustainable management of cultural and natural resources in Easter Island; design of a medium-term resource management plan for sustainable tourism initiatives, and the implementation of micro-projects on ecotourism and sustainable development.

The project will benefit institutions, businesses, and individuals who promote tourism development on the island, such as hotel managers, employees, park rangers, tourism firms and local authorities, in addition to teachers, trainers, tourism sector students, and the Rapa Nui population.

Cuba and the Dominican Republic
Educating for environmental responsibility

As in other regions of the world, the UNESCO’s Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) in Cuba and the Dominican Republic addresses the issue of education for sustainable development.

Since 1999, the Sandwatch project (“Observando la arena”) has been underway in both countries. An island heritage protection initiative, the project seeks to raise awareness among youth of the fragile ocean and coastal environment, as well as the need to exercise moderation in its exploitation. It is a process through which students and community members work together.

Participants learn to critically assess problems and conflicts that affect the coastal environment. “For example, the students observe the tidal movement and how this causes erosion of the beaches. Afterwards they develop practical strategies that integrate sustainable development values and enable action for social and environmental change”, notes Miguel Llivina, education programme officer for the UNESCO Havana office.

In the Dominican Republic, ASPnet schools “organized a public campaign and protested against construction firms that plan to build tourist complexes that are causing erosion throughout the entire area”, adds Llivina.

“Observando la arena” contributes to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014.

Mexico
Youth empowered to manage their region’s water resources

Reflection on local democratic governability is important for living in an increasingly interdependent and globalised world. This premise is the basis for a programme formed in conjunction with other United Nations agencies called “Strengthening effective and democratic management of water and sanitation for supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Mexico”. The programme works with youth in the states of Chiapas, Veracruz and Tabasco, which have the lowest human development in the country but are host to natural wealth and cultural diversity.

The United Nations agencies UNESCO, UN-Habitat, FAO, UNDP, ECLAC, UNIDO, UNODC, and WHO seek to reclaim traditional practices and customs related to water resource management while also increasing access to information on water and sanitation services, and hydro meteorological phenomena (floods, soil and hillside instability) that increase environmental vulnerability.

The appreciation of traditional practices, combined with technical knowledge and participation, allow young men and women of these three Mexican states to contribute effectively, within the framework of equity and transparency, to the design, management and monitoring of public policy carried out by water and sanitation services.

Peru
The bio-garden: a tool for forming micro-business environmentalists

In Trujillo, Peru, the Rafael Narváez Cadenillas Experimental Education Centre of the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo developed a project for secondary school students in order to address the extreme poverty of the region, family nutritional deficiency, lack of employment opportunities, the limited existence of agricultural industries and the scant development of education for sustainable development. The idea was to incorporate the development of a bio-garden into the curriculum to facilitate the teaching of sustainable practices for future micro-businesses that will take the environment into account.

The educational centre changed the focus of its pedagogical practice in different subjects (education for employment, sciences, technology, environment), established a series of contents and skills, and divided students into various work
groups to function as small businesses (general management, administration and accounting unit, production and research unit, marketing and sales unit). Members in each unit swap roles democratically, reinforcing students’ self-esteem and self-discipline. Finally, the micro-businesses present their projects and products in science and technology fairs.

The project led to the creation of 30 student ecological micro-businesses. Teachers, students and parents participated in the project. The experience has become a model for other regions of Peru. A network of bio-gardens, on the local, departmental and national levels, is in the works. OREALC/UNESCO Santiago describes this successful experience in its Innovemos Network (http://www.redinnovemos.org).

Caribbean
Reducing poverty among youth through sustainable tourism training

Youth PATH (Youth Poverty Alleviation through Tourism and Heritage) is a regional initiative that aims to contribute to poverty alleviation among young people in eight Caribbean countries through community natural-and-cultural-heritage tourism. Established in 2002 by the UNESCO Office for the Caribbean based in Kingston, Jamaica, Youth PATH provides training on the conservation and management of natural and cultural heritage to men and women ages 15 – 25. To date, the project has trained and certified 420 young people from 13 English and Dutch speaking countries in the Caribbean.

Youth PATH trainings include tourism site development; networking and partnerships; natural and cultural preservation; equipment and ICTs; crafts; business skills; life skills; communication and leadership skills; personal development; HIV/AIDS awareness; organizational structure; and tourism business, site management and employment. Partnerships have been established in 8 countries to provide programme participants with internships in the private sector and at national agencies. Technical support is also provided to young people to help them become tourism industry entrepreneurs by establishing craft businesses and heritage cafeterias that serve traditional and indigenous food.

Latin America
Sustainable consumption workshop “YouthXChange”

Youth are an important group within consumer societies and their habits play a decisive role in today’s markets and lifestyles. They are protagonists with influential sway in the world economy. If society and inefficient patterns of production and consumption are to improve, youth must be the agents of this change. For this reason the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNESCO united to create a folder of teaching tools (http://www.unesco.org/es/aspnet/educational-kits/) for teachers, trainers, NGOs, and youth groups that are interested in responsible, sustainable consumerism.

The programme aims to empower youth with knowledge of all aspects of production, distribution, and the use and disposal of consumer products so that these cycles can be redesigned in order to ensure that a community’s basic needs are met, while reducing excess and avoiding environmental damage. This approach can contribute to achieving the objective of doubling production by 2050 while reducing resource-use by half of the quantity employed currently.

What are some of the tips offered by the guide? Eat healthy and fresh food, avoid eating out-of-season foods, demand content labels, reduce use of chemicals, reduce use of cars and motorised vehicles, reduce garbage, use cloth bags instead of plastic bags, save energy, do not use aerosol sprays, reduce levels of pollution, and save water. These guidelines will be discussed in a workshop organized by UNESCO at the World Youth Conference 2010 in Mexico in order to create networks of youth organizations that promote the issue across the region.

Chile
Environmentally certified schools

Chile’s National Environmental Commission (CONAMA) has developed a National Environmental Certification System for Educational Establishments (Spanish acronym SNCAE), a programme coordinated jointly with the Ministry of Education,
the National Forestry Corporation (Spanish acronym CONAF), the Chilean Association of Municipalities (Spanish acronym ACHM), UNESCO, the General Water Administration (Spanish acronym DGA), and the Council for Sustainable Development, the programme sponsor.

The programme aims to encourage actions that communicate the importance of a sustainable culture, and foster values and environmental conservation in the school community. Striving to achieve these goals, it established environmental standards to measure the presence of environmental components in three spheres of education: curriculum, management and environmental relations. This measurement allows schools, according to their respective experiences, to gradually advance and progress from an initial level of less complexity to a level of excellence. The SNCAE also develops complementary lines of action to enhance environmental education, care and protection of the environment and generate associative networks for local environmental management.

After registering in the programme, each educational establishment can choose either basic certification or prepare to apply directly for the higher levels (medium and excellent), which call for verification of the level of achievement required by the Regional Environmental Certification (CRCA), comprised by representatives of the Regional Education Secretary, CONAMA and CONAF regional boards, in addition to other relevant public or private bodies, according to the requisites formulated by each region. The CRCA’s functions include granting environmental certification and overseeing fulfilment of commitments made by the schools that have earned certification.

More than 1000 schools in every region of Chile participate in the programme.

**Mexico**

**Mexican Heritage Kit**

How can youth be taught to promote and develop and reclaim heritage values? The “World Heritage in Young Hands” kit hopes to find answers to this question. 501 schools in 26 states use this instrument, intended to encourage values through the recovery of Mexico’s rich heritage, as participants in UNESCO’s Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), a collaboration project between the Mexican Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO and UNESCO’s office in Mexico.

The kit introduces innovative education techniques that aim to share knowledge about the conservation of world heritage with students through journeys to the world’s cultural and natural heritage sites. The kit uses creative and participatory methodology to involve youth in research, compilation, and data analysis. It also encourages them to participate in planned excursions and conduct cultural and natural-heritage conservation campaigns. It fosters debate and encourages students to listen to one another respectfully and enrich themselves with diverse thinking in order to gain a greater appreciation for local and world heritage (http://whc.unesco.org/en/educationkit/)

Photo: © UNESCO Brasilia.
Learning about and valuing cultural and natural heritage supports sustainability.
In recent years, a number of activities have been undertaken to improve the situation of youth in countries of the region. However, much still remains to be done in order to ensure that all young people enjoy positive social, economic, and cultural conditions.

The General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2010 the “International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”. OREALC/UNESCO Santiago wishes to use this occasion to reassert the importance of development and investment in public policy that takes into account the needs of youth, especially those who are in vulnerable situations or at risk of marginalisation.

Active participation by youth is crucial. In Latin America and the Caribbean, youth have all the abilities and motivation needed to be full partners in the development of their countries. They can propose innovative solutions to the problems confronted by the region and lay the foundation for a more just and sustainable world.
Document prepared for the World Youth Conference
Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico 2010