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OUR OPINION MATTERS

Perspective of Boys, Girls and Adolescents on Discrimination and Barriers to Inclusive Education

CATALYST FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ASDOWN COLOMBIA

FUNDACIÓN SARAKI PARAGUAY

SOCIEDAD PERUANA DE SÍNDROME DE DOWN

Qualitative multi-country study on the barriers that prevent access to inclusive education in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families.

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Glossary

Accessibility

The CRPD guarantees "access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas."

Reasonable accommodation

Necessary and appropriate modification and adjustment not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy or exercise, on an equal basis with others, all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Reasonable accommodation is complementary to the obligation of accessibility.

Ways and means of teaching must be accessible and teaching must be carried out in accessible environments.

Literacy

The population of a country that reads and writes at some level of comprehension and sometimes only at a functional level.

Universal design

The design of products, environments, programs, and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Inclusive education

Education which is based on the right of all learners to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. By focusing particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual.

Special schools

Schools that provide separate services for boys and girls with disabilities and remain separate from mainstream educational institutions; also called segregated schools.

Inclusive schools

Schools which welcome all children and where boys and girls with disabilities attend regular classes with age-appropriate peers, learn the curriculum to the extent feasible, and are provided with additional resources and support depending on needs.

School Exclusion

When male and female students are directly or indirectly prevented from or denied access to education in any form.

Inclusion

Process of systemic reform that entails changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, education structures and strategies to overcome obstacles so that all students of the relevant age groups have an equitable and participative learning experience, and an environment that best suits their needs and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes in the absence of subsequent structural changes, for example, in the organization, curricula or teaching/learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion.

Integration

Process by which people with disabilities attend mainstream educational institutions without any type of adjustment or adaptation process.

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Medical model
Views disability as an attribute of a person, arising as a result of a health condition or injury. Disability is seen primarily as a matter of professional health care, with treatments and services to help the individual adapt to given circumstances.

Participation
Action of being involved in any type of activity.

Presence
In this document it refers to the fact that students with disabilities are in the same place as other students.

Segregation
The education of students with disabilities in separate environments, separating them from students without disabilities.

General services
Services available to any members of a population, regardless of whether they have a disability, such as, public transportation, education and training, labor and employment services, housing, healthcare and income support systems.

Self-Esteem
Esteem is the value given to a person. Presence is not enough; students with disabilities ask to be valued as individuals for their achievements and contributions.

☑ List of Initialisms and Acronyms used

LAC	**Latin America and the Caribbean**
IADB	**Inter-American Development Bank**
CBM	**Christian Blind Mission**
CRC	**Convention on the Rights of the Child**
CRPD	**Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**
CEBE	**Centro de Educación Especial (Special Education Center)**
HR	**Human Rights**
ENEDIS	**Encuesta Nacional Especializada sobre Discapacidad (National Survey on Disability)**
GEM	**Global Education Monitoring Report**
FGD	**Focus Group Discussions**
GPE	**Global Partnership for Education**
HI	**Humanity and Inclusion**
HLPF	**High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**
HRW	**Human Rights Watch**
II	**Inclusion International**
INEI	**National Institute of Statistics and Information**
UN	**United Nations**
OAS	**Organization of American States**
SDG	**Sustainable Development Goals**
GC4	**CRPD General comment No. 4 (2016) on the right to inclusive education**
OSEE	**Oficina de Seguimiento y Evaluación Estratégica (Strategic Monitoring and Evaluation Office)**

PRITE	**Programas de Intervención Temprana (Early Intervention Programs)**
RREI	**Regional Network for Inclusive Education**
SAANEE	**Servicio de Apoyo y Asesoramiento para la Atención a las Necesidades**
Educativas	**(Support and Advice Service for the Attention to Educational Needs)**
SIMAT	**Sistema Integrado de Matrícula (Integrated Registration System)**
SIRIED	**Sistema Regional de Educación Informativa (Regional System of Educational Information)**
SND	**Sistema Nacional de Discapacidad (National Disability System)**
SPSD	**Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down (Peruvian Society for Down Syndrome)**
UNESCO	**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**
UNICEF	**United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund**
UNICEF	**LACRO UNICEF's Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office**
USAID	**United States Agency for International Development**

Executive Summary

Recognizing the multiple obstacles to Inclusive Education in Latin America - identified through various studies– UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (UNICEF LACRO) and Inclusion International (II) developed an innovative process of participatory research, that collects and analyzes qualitative information from the perspective of boys and girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families on the barriers that male and female students with disabilities face in the framework of inclusive education. Consistent with the CRPD and General Comment 4, the study conceptualized Inclusive Education as the best way to educate all the citizens of a country, including those who have disabilities.

This right has been recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Salamanca Statement, the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and General Comment No. 4 of the CRPD.

In the introduction, the elements of an inclusive education are identified and analyzed, highlighting its value for the groups of students with disabilities that have been systemically and systematically excluded, with emphasis on complying with Sustainable Development Goal 4 to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

Inclusion International is an international network of people with intellectual disabilities and their families advocating for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities worldwide. Its Catalyst for Inclusive Education team led, coordinated and supported the partners of this initiative. Inclusion International conducted multiple webinars and virtual meetings; designed the tools and strategies described in the methodology to ensure that in both the consultation and work results, various perspectives were taken into account; and analyzed the information from the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) on the obstacles to inclusive education from the perspective of children and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families. The analysis, presented in Chapter 4, provides new findings and confirms many that have been identified in other report. Chapter 5 contains recommendations for the future regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

The design of the consultations, together with the results of the focus group discussions, produced a common learning among partners. and the design was based on the agreement between UNICEF LACRO and II in relation to the participation of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families to include all types of disabilities; analyzing groups from diverse contexts of education: urban-rural context; socio-economic condition; those excluded from

education, special education, integration or inclusion; public or private education The design also sought to strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones, looking for synergies with other organizations working with children and adolescents with different disabilities, and from providers of educational services or similar either Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) or public and private educational institutions. This report presents this wealth of information.

The methodology for the initiative had 9 stages with the following main activities:

STAGE I Partners and Partnership development

Communities from three countries in Latin America were selected -Paraguay, Peru and Colombia-, through Fundación Saraki, Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down and ASDOWN Colombia – all members of II- to learn from the vast knowledge that these organizations have about educational system practices in their countries, identifying policies, practices, beliefs, and attitudes that turn out to be obstacles to "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all".

They all have partnerships with various organizations and belong to coalitions concerning inclusive education, as well as infrastructure in the country that hosted the consultation.

STAGE II Partner Strengthening.

The II team clarified and agreed on the conceptualization and implications of an inclusive education using as a framework the description and elements of inclusive education defined in the General Comment 4.

It provided the framework for the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities to be applied by the partners and to define the consultation protocols, the structure of reports and the recommendations and conclusions.

STAGE III Design of the Consultation Framework.

The team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education created three tools for consultation: an informative report on education; a survey on the educational country profile and the methodology to be used in this initiative. Through these tools, the three allied organizations could establish, in a more precise way, the context of education, figures, barriers to inclusive education, and recommendations for each country.

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1. Sustainable Development Goal number 4.

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STAGE IV Protocol Design and Consultation Strategies.

Under a model of participative research where allied organizations' work experience and institutional dynamic are acknowledged, and with the premise that giving the control of transformation processes to the subjects of these is vital to develop a sense of belonging and to ensure long term sustainability, each of the partners established the consultation protocol structure, the criteria for the selection of the participants and the strategies for the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents and families, including the Methodological Guides of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

The FGD used a protocol validated by the regional team of Catalysts for Inclusive Education and the partners, with material developed for this initiative, which includes presentations, videos and sketches to collect the reactions and answers of the participants. The "Informed Consent" was an important part of these protocols.

STAGE V Implementation of Consultations through Focus Groups

Twenty-two consultations took place in all three countries, with an average of 10 participants per group, having as a primary goal to identify the perception that boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families have regarding the obstacles that those with disabilities face having accessibility, participation, permanence, progress, and learning in a regular school that promotes inclusion.

Strategies to ensure participation were implemented such as sign language interpreters, translation into Guarani for bilingualism in Paraguay, the collaboration of facilitators with expertise in consultations with boys, girls with various levels of accessibility and appropriate strategies according to the age and situation of the participants in each of the groups.

The strategies considered in the guidelines with students were adapted to the needs that each group showed, encouraging the use of pictures, pictograms and drawings to ensure the participation of all attendants.

STAGE VI Delivery of FGD Results and Testimonials.

The FGD identified the barriers from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families. Their testimonials are the main inputs for the subsequent analysis, which produces two sets of results: 1) Specific suggestions regarding the observed situation and recommended actions, from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families for each one of the three countries; 2) a set of general comments and recommendations that can be considered in the broader Latin American context.

The reports , from each of the partners, described the strategies used in the various Focus Group Discussions and identified the barriers to Inclusive Education in Latin America– from the perspective of of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families.

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Besides, the reports offer stories and testimonies of the reality that families and their children face to have accessibility, participation, permanence, progress, and learning in the current educational system in each of the three participating countries.

STAGE VII Processing and Analysis of Information

The information from the FGD was analyzed and organized under the following parameters which in turn are consistent with the proposals in the Education 2030 Framework for Action:

> a. Accessibility barriers
> b. Barriers to Participation
> c. Barriers to Permanence
> d. Barriers to Progress / Learning
> e. Barriers to Welfare

Based on collected information, findings that operate as obstacles to inclusive education were identified, with a focus on students with disabilities. These findings are introduced in Chapter 4, highlighting some new ones, namely:

- Disability discrimination cannot be claimed.
- Quality education of students with disabilities is not a priority for governments, teachers and families.
- There is a lack of knowledge and leadership on Inclusive Education implications and practices.
- Students with disabilities cannot learn because what they are taught is not relevant for them.
- Few families choose and/or fight for inclusion.
- Inclusive Education is not systemic in any of the consulted countries.
- Families are overburdened, with little support.

And they confirm other findings that operate as obstacles:

- Disability discrimination is prevalent.
- Attitudes, beliefs, and feelings towards people with disabilities lead to low expectations, lack of welfare, and a perception of insecurity for boys, girls with disabilities in inclusive education.
- Inequity is greatly underestimated.
- Education of people with disabilities is not a priority in most governments' agendas.
- In many countries, the misconception persists that inclusive education is the way to provide education to students with disabilities, rather than being for all learners.
- Children and adolescents with disabilities are disproportionately out of schools.

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STAGE VIII Process Evaluation

Recommendations and Conclusions

In Chapter 5, some recommendations are presented for governments, UNICEF LACRO and for all actors in education with the objective of generating the mobilization for quality inclusive education with equity in the Americas.

We propose recommendations for the strengthening of organizations of people with disabilities and their families so that they can recognize and demand equitable and inclusive quality education, in three areas:

- By generating coherence among the various actors with roles to play in inclusive education;
- By building leadership and collaboration,
- By ensuring that quality education is understood to require inclusion and equity.

The analysis concluded that a positive disruption is needed in the current educational systems, that is to say, a paradigm shift rather than only gradual, incremental changes.

The findings point to the need for boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities, to become critical actors in the process of transforming systems to be inclusive, such as by playing a stronger role in classrooms where they can be watchmen and promote better practices towards students with disabilities. Boys, girls and adolescents without disabilities can be guardians and identify injustices and discrimination experienced by students with disabilities inside classrooms whenever necessary.

The findings suggest that it is essential to re-think strategies towards inclusive education with a critical view to the global concern about the quality of education and the "education crisis", which to date have not identified the premise that quality cannot take place without equity and inclusion.

Conclusions in Chapter 6 identify several aspects: aspects related to the knowledge and understanding of inclusive education; how relationships dynamics with and between the organizations at the country and regional level played a valuable role in the development of the initiative; the emergence of new challenges within the consultation and the implications regarding strategies used ; and others linked to the collaborations needed for the participation of actors in the development of Focus Groups, in addition to the ones related to involving new actors such as boys, girls and adolescents during the research process.

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Looking Towards the Future

Based on the analysis of the obstacles identified by children and adolescents and their families, and all the information generated in the research, together with the experience of II and the team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education, consideration was given to identifying possible future work to promote the strengthening of Inclusive Education in the short and medium term, in order to achieve changes in the educational system that have a real impact on the education of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities. These changes are introduced in the last chapters of this report.

STAGE IX Preparation of the Final Report

The document of the Final Report was prepared through:

- Revision and analysis of the partners' Profile Document and Country reports
- Implementation of Focus Groups with boys, girls and adolescents, families and the pertaining information analysis
- Analysis of testimonies

This information allowed an exploratory analysis through the partners' description of the current situation of Inclusive Education in each country as a panoramic view within the research, based on the obstacles identified by boys and girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families for Inclusive Education.

By means of this initiative, various strategies were applied to encourage knowledge exchange and synergies between participant organizations under the advice of the regional team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education. This resulted in the strengthening of the skills of the team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education and partners, members of II, Asdown, Fundación Saraki and the Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down.

The greatest value of the initiative was that it also allowed learning from the perspective of boys and girls and adolescents with disabilities about what they experience in everyday life and what they identify as barriers for students with disabilities to have accessibility, participation, permanence, recognition and learning inside regular schools and classrooms in each of their countries. [2]

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This study allows a look inside schools and classrooms through the eyes of those who participate and learn in them – boys, girls and adolescents with and without disability.

It will be useful to inform the design of programs and policies about inclusive education, based on an analysis from the expertise of the participant organizations and the II team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education.[3]

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Introduction – Purpose of the Study

After identifying through diverse studies many obstacles to Inclusive Education in Latin America, **UNICEF LACRO** and Inclusion International (II) have developed an original process of participative research, which compiles and analyzes qualitative information from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families.

Communities from three countries of Latin America were selected (**Paraguay, Peru and Colombia**), through **Fundación Saraki, Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down (SPSD) and ASDOWN Colombia** – organizations which are members of II - in order to extract, from their vast knowledge about various practices in their countries' educational systems, information that allows the identification of policies, practices, beliefs and attitudes that play as obstacles and, what is more important, to learn from the perspectives of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities how to have accessibility, participation, recognition and learning in regular schools and classrooms.[1]

This study allows us to have a look inside schools and classrooms through the eyes of those who participate and learn there – boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities.

It will be useful to influence the design of programs and policies about inclusive education, providing an analysis from the expertise of participant organizations and the II team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education. [2]

The development of this study aimed to:

- Develop tools to gather information about barriers to inclusive education by using General Comment 4 (CG4) as the reference framework.

- Use the tools to gather and analyze qualitative information about barriers to inclusive education practices within the diverse contexts, histories and educational structures of communities selected from the three countries, focusing on boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities, from the perspective and voices of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families.

- Analyze the information gathered from the voices of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families, so as to allow identifying exclusion, obstacles and challenges for boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities in seeking equitable and inclusive quality education.

- Use the information gathered from the voices of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families in order to identify strategies, possibilities and opportunities in each country to improve the educational systems, to be inclusive for boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities.

- **Use the partners' accumulated knowledge to develop an educational system that is inclusive for boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities.**

- **Identify strategies and recommendations of the partners in their countries aimed to eliminate obstacles and barriers and to "increase" efforts for inclusive education in the region.**

- **Produce, publish and distribute a report on the findings of this study by UNICEF LACRO and II.**

- **Use the report in the 3 countries to link local voices and knowledge with a regional process to achieve equitable and inclusive quality education as proposed in the 2030 Agenda and the GC4 framework in the region.**

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☑ Chapter 1. Reference Framework, Background, and Contexts in the Region

What does the right to education
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The right to educationand inclusive education mean?

Education has been proclaimed as a fundamental right for all boys, girls, and adolescents Education for All had a goal of universal primary education. The 2030 Agenda proposes universal secondary education that is cost-free, non-discriminatory, and respectful of the human dignity and value of all.

Since 2000, there has been great progress towards the goal of universal primary education. The total registration rate reached 91% in developing regions in 2015, and the number of boys and girls not attending school decreased by almost half worldwide. There have also been significant increases in literacy rates and more girls are attending school than ever before.

Nevertheless, the most recent **UNESCO** figures state that around 263 million boys, girls, and adolescents ranging between 6 and 17 years of age are not attending school at present (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016)[1]. Projections suggest that 25 million of these boys and girls will never enter into a classroom. There are important gender inequalities and girls represent two thirds of the children not attending school.

In relation to the wealthiest boys and girls, the poorest boys and girls are four times likelier to not attend school and have five times more chances of not completing primary education (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016)[2]; although the situation is more acute in the developing world, growing inequalities are also present in many wealthier countries, a situation that is worsened mainly due to increased globalization and international migration.

The reports identify that one third of the boys, girls, and adolescents out of the education system have a disability[3], being the minority group with the highest level of exclusion from school: those with an intellectual disability are disproportionately represented. In addition, many of those attending school go to segregated institutions, the so-called special schools, just for students with disabilities. Upon completing their education, many students, whether attending special or regular schools, do not know how to read and/or write, and they lack the necessary skills needed to continue studying or get a paid job.

Even though the principle of non-discrimination is established in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, guaranteeing the right to education for all, the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states with further details the right to education for persons with

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disabilities "without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity" to "ensure an inclusive education system at all levels" (CRPD Art.24).

Research and experiences show that the only way to tackle this inequality is guaranteeing that all boys, girls, and adolescents receive quality inclusive education, including students with disabilities; this requires rethinking education from the point of view of inclusion not only as a right but from the financial perspective since, economically speaking, it is impossible for a country to include all those students excluded from schools when there are two options: regular and special education.

Inclusive education has been acknowledged as the aspirational goal for a better Education for All since the 1994 Salamanca Statement, as reiterated in the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action. Education for All; the CRPD in 2006 and, more recently, in the 2030 Agenda in the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) (Box 1). These documents speak of guaranteeing education to all those who due to different situations are excluded from schools, such as "the most vulnerable ones, including the poor and more disadvantaged, children that work, remote rural inhabitants and nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, youngsters, and adults affected by conflicts, persons with HIV/AIDS, those that are hungry or have bad health, as well as those with special learning needs." However, in practice, those with disabilities and especially those with an intellectual disability, have been left out:4 that is why this report focuses on boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities.

Box 1. Inclusive Education – Frame of Reference

"Inclusive education is central to achieving high quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities, and for the development of inclusive, peaceful and fair societies".[5]

This right is stated in:

1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1976
3. Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990
4. Salamanca Statement, 1994
5. Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All, 2000
6. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006
7. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015
8. General Comment 4 of the CRPD, 2016

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Article 24 of the CRPD sets forth the right to education for persons with disabilities; it also says that "without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning" (Box 2).

In order to clarify the meaning of Article 24 of the CRPD, the CRPD Committee issued GC4[6] in 2016 (Box 3).

The 2030 Agenda (2015)[7] specifies in SGD 4 the type of education that is necessary in today's world - "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." Besides appearing in the wording of the goal, the concept of inclusion appears in other goals, particularly in goal 4.5 whose purpose is to remove "gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations" and in objective 4.a whose goal is to "Build and upgrade education facilities that are child -, disability - and gender -sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning settings for all."

The 2030[7]Agenda emphasizes the goal of achieving inclusive and quality education for all based on the firm conviction that education is one of the most powerful and tested engines for guaranteeing sustainable development. With this goal in mind, SGD4 intends to ensure that all boys and girls complete their free primary and secondary education by 2030; it also intends to provide equal access to affordable technical education and remove gender and income inequalities while achieving universal access to tertiary quality education.

The Framework for Action Education 2030[8] has been adopted by the world community in order to advance towards SDG4 and its targets. The Framework underlines the need to tackle all types of exclusion and marginalization; it calls specifically for tackling all inequalities related to access, participation, learning processes and results, paying special attention to gender equality. This includes efforts for allowing that education systems are for all students, with a particular focus on those that have been traditionally excluded from educational opportunities.

The 2020 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report shall continue assessing the progress made in relation to attaining the Sustainable Development Goal related to education (SDG 4) and its ten targets, as well as other education-related targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in relation to Inclusion and Education. The questions9 in the report are intended to give answers to:

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I. Which are the barriers for implementing inclusive education?

- Which factors block or promote development in inclusive education? What can school leaders, teachers, fathers and mothers, and civil society do to help overcome barriers?

- How do laws, policies, and community rules affect inclusive education?

- To which extent do countries keep education facilities separated for different groups? Is the classification voluntary or mandatory?

II. How are the rendering and the results of inclusive education measured?

- How do we measure who is included and excluded?

- Which are the sources of national and international data on inclusive education?

- Which are the main challenges in data collection?

III. Which are the main research gaps on inclusive education and which should be the priorities of the GEM Report when requesting free work?

Box 2. Article 24 - CRPD

1. State Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:

a) The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
b) The development by persons with disabilities of their personalities, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
c) Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.

2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:

a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;

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c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in settings that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including, among them:

a) Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
b) Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
c) Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes of communication for the individual, and in settings which maximize academic and social development.

4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign languages and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.

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Box 3. General Comment 4 of 2016

Pursuant to article 24, paragraph 1, the States Parties must ensure that persons with disabilities may exercise their right to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education cycles, the professional training and teaching throughout their lives, as well as social and extracurricular activities for all students, including those with disabilities, without discrimination and under the same conditions of the others.

Guaranteeing the right to education entails a transformation of the culture, politics and practice in all the formal and informal education settings in order to provide access to the different needs and identities of each student, as well as the commitment to remove the obstacles that prevent this from happening while also including strengthening the ability of the education system to reach all students. In addition, the full and effective participation, the accessibility, the attendance, and the good academic performance of all the students, in particular of those that, for different reasons, are in a situation of exclusion, or may be marginalized, are key elements when guaranteeing the right to an inclusive education.

Inclusion includes access to a non-discriminatory high quality formal and informal education and the progress achieved in that sense. Its purpose is to allow the communities, the systems, and the structures to fight against discrimination, including harmful stereotypes, acknowledging diversity, promoting the participation and overcoming the obstacles that hinder learning and the participation of all by focusing on the welfare and success of students with disabilities. It also requires a deep transformation of the education systems at the levels of the legislation, policies, and mechanisms for financing, managing, designing, providing, and supervising education.

Inclusive education must be understood as:

a) A fundamental human right of every student; more precisely, education is a right of the students and not of the parents or of the caregivers, in the case of children. The responsibilities of the parents in this case depend on the rights of the child.

b) A principle that values the welfare of all the students, respect their inherent dignity and autonomy, and acknowledges the needs of the persons and their effective ability to be included in society by contributing to it.

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c) It is a means for making other human rights effective. It is the main means for people with disabilities to overcome poverty and obtain the resources in order to participate fully in their communities and protect themselves from exploitation.[10] It is also the main means for giving rise to inclusive societies.

d) It is the result of an ongoing and dynamic commitment process for eliminating the barriers that prevent the right to education, as well as of changes in culture, policies and practices of the general education schools in order to receive and make the inclusion of all students effective.

How is Inclusive Education defined and what does it imply?

"It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than a new system. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institution and merely lukewarm defenders in those who gain by the new ones."

Niccolò Machiavelli

Since 1994, through the Salamanca Statement and the Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs[11] approved by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: access and quality, UNESCO acknowledged inclusive education as a better way to provide education to students identified as those "with special needs education;" it did not take long to realize that it was suggesting a better education model for all students which was intrinsically related to the quality of education.

Even though there has been progress in Latin American countries concerning the intention to transform education systems towards inclusive education (Box 4), successful experiences are still limited to a micro-scale in schools, a secretariat of education and, in some cases, a municipality. Many are difficult to keep going over time, depending on a few actors and hard to increase to a macro-scale. Few places in the world have an inclusive education system in which there are no special schools, or special classrooms, for educating students with disabilities.

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Box 4. Core features of inclusive education are:

1. A *"whole System"* approach: all the resources are invested in promoting and advancing inclusive education.

2. A *"comprehensive educational setting"* which includes culture, policies, and practices.

3. A *"whole person"* approach: it acknowledges the ability of each person to learn, and establishes high expectations for all the students. Inclusive Education offers flexible curricula, teaching, and learning through methods adapted to the different strengths, needs, and learning styles. It focuses on the skills and aspirations of the boys and girls instead of on the content when teaching activities are planned.

4. *Supported teachers:* all the teachers and other staff members receive the required education and training to have the values and competences needed to accommodate inclusive learning environments.

5. Respect for all and valuing *diversity:* all the members of the learning community are equally welcome and respect for diversity is evidenced.

6. *Learning-friendly environments:* inclusive learning environments are accessible settings where all feel safe, supported, stimulated and able to express themselves.

7. *Effective transitions:* boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities receive support to ensure the effective transition from learning at school to vocational and tertiary education and, finally, to work (life-long focus).

8. Recognition *of partnerships:* the relationship between the learning environment and the wider community must be acknowledged as a route towards inclusive societies.

9. Monitoring: it involves persons with disabilities.

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Inclusive education acknowledges that all girls, boys, and adolescents have the right to grow, learn, and develop along with their peers, in safe places and with equal opportunities; it also responds to the design of a common education system which is, at the same time, a response to the requirements of each student, with strategies that tackle differences not as a problem but as an opportunity to democratize and enrich learning in the entire school age population (UNESCO, 2008).[12] Ultimately, inclusive education arises from the conviction that education is a basic human right at the basis of a fairer society.

In that sense, the need for the education system to comprise education institutions that receive all students in order to provide quality education to all of them, without segregating them pursuant to their condition while providing the support they require for guaranteeing that their learning becomes evident. To this end, it is necessary to develop cultures, policies and inclusive practices that accept, receive, respect, and celebrate diversity and cooperative work, mobilizing the entire education system so it may respond to the needs, characteristics, potential, and interests of all the students. In addition, it is key to make a commitment to remove the barriers that could prevent the exercise of the right to education of all students, guaranteeing that supports and adjustments are provided, and respecting the different personalities and learning processes of each student.[13]

Inclusive education "has been described in its essence as a statement of political aspiration, an essential ingredient in the creation of inclusive societies, and a commitment to a democratic framework for action. (…) Accordingly, inclusive education is not restricted to questions about where education takes place (for example, in segregated special schools or regular schools), but it also involves a range of elements that form educational experiences and outcomes. These elements can include the content of education and learning materials, teaching and teacher preparation, infrastructure and learning setting, community norms, and the availability of space for dialogue and criticism involving all stakeholders. As an example, education cannot be considered inclusive if textbooks promote one ethnic group above others, do not show images of persons with disabilities (added by the authors) and contain discriminatory content. Inclusive education emerges from a vision of the world based on equity, justice and fairness.[14]

Using GC4 as a starting point, which strived to clarify the implications of an inclusive system by reaffirming that "States parties must ensure the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels, including pre-schools, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extracurricular and social activities, and for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination and on equal terms with others,[15] it specified that inclusive education "focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized."

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Although GC4 has a wide description of the elements of quality inclusive education, the ignorance on the part of the actors, in particular those that make decisions in the education system, has given rise to differences in its implementation; that is why defining inclusive education and establishing its implications is still one of the most important challenges in most of the countries of the region.

The summary below[16] highlights priority aspects of GC4 concerning the definition of inclusive education and the identification of the aspects to be taken into account:

Inclusive education is central to achieving high-quality education for all learners, must be realized at all levels (preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education, vocational training and lifelong learning, extracurricular and social activities), for all students, including persons with disabilities, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Inclusive education entails a transformation in culture, policy and practice, a commitment to removing barriers, and strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners.

It focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance and achievement of all students without discrimination. It is a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies. States parties must commit sufficient financial and human resources.

The right to inclusive education is assured without discrimination and on the basis of equality of opportunity. (Box 5. It establishes the difference between exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion). Discrimination includes the right to not be segregated and it must be understood within the context of the obligation to provide accessible learning settings and reasonable accommodation.[17]

The exclusion of persons with disabilities from the general education system should be prohibited, including through any legislative or regulatory provisions that limit their inclusion on the basis of their impairment or the degree of that impairment. It must support the creation of opportunities to build on the unique strengths and talents of each individual with a disability.

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Box 5 – Difference between exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion

In **GC4**, the **CRPD** highlights the importance of recognizing the differences between exclusion, segregation, integration, and inclusion.

Exclusion occurs when access is prevented or denied, directly or indirectly, to students to all types of education.

Segregation takes place when the education of students with disabilities is provided in divided settings, designed or used in order to respond to a concrete deficiency, or to several deficiencies, separating them from students without disabilities.

Integration is the process through which disabled persons attend general education institutions with the conviction that they can adapt to the normalized requirements of those institutions.

Inclusion implies a systemic reform process entailing changes and modifications in the content, teaching methods, educational approaches, structures and strategies aimed at overcoming the obstacles by keeping in mind that all the students of the pertaining groups have an equitable and participatory learning experience in a setting that better suits their needs and preferences. The inclusion of students with disabilities in the conventional classrooms without the corresponding structural changes, for example in the organization, curricula, and teaching and learning strategies, cannot be considered inclusion. In addition, integration does not guarantee automatically the transition from segregation to inclusion.

The education system must comprise four interrelated features: availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. Compulsory, quality, free and accessible primary education is an immediate obligation. States parties have a specific and continuing obligation to move as expeditiously and effectively as possible towards the full realization of article 24.

"This is not compatible with sustaining two systems of education. It must consider the child's own views and individual identity, the preservation of the family, care, protection and safety of the child, any particular vulnerability, and the child's right to health and education. It must provide habilitation and rehabilitation services within the education system, at the earliest stage possible, be based on a multidisciplinary assessment of each student's strengths and support maximum independence, autonomy, respect of dignity, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability and inclusion and participation in all aspects of life." [18]

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As already mentioned, there has been progress; however, there are reasons for concern because there are still deeply-rooted problems. Many million boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities are denied the right to education and many more have it only in settings in which they are isolated from their peers while receiving lower quality education (Table 6).

Inclusion implies a systemic reform process entailing changes and modifications in the content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and education strategies to overcome obstacles so all the girls, boys, and adolescents of the corresponding age groups have an equitable and participatory learning experience in common settings that correspond to their needs and preferences.[19]

It also requires a deep transformation of the education systems at the levels of legislation, policies and mechanisms for financing, managing, providing, designing and supervising education.[20]

Based on the study of the recommendations, there is a reflection on the term "systemic reform process" that may be responsible for the slowness in the implementation of inclusive education and the great gap among the current discourses, theory, and practices.

Inclusive education for students with disabilities means:

1. Attending regular schools, in the regular classrooms where they would be if they did not have an impairment (public schools of their neighborhood/locality, or those attended by their brothers and sisters who do not have disabilities).

2. Being with classmates of the same age.

3. Receiving the support types they need for their participation, belonging, permanence, promotion, and learning.

4. Having teachers that have the support types required in order to provide relevant teaching strategies and exams.

5. Structural changes in the conventional classes; for example, in the organization, curricula, and teaching and learning strategies.

Some practical examples could be didactic practices based on diversity, success expectations of students with disabilities, flexible curriculum design, flexible achievement indicators, collaborative work-related relationships, work spaces, and accompaniment of the families in the education of their sons and daughters.

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Why is it important for people with disabilities? [21]

"We still hear the term special education. I say there is nothing special about being special. When special is used in the everyday world it is a term of endearment, when it is used in the intellectual disability world it means segregation and it is disrespectful and makes us feel inferior to other people.

What happens when you leave school? Well, there are no special jobs and there is no special communities or societies. I say let's get rid of special once and for all."

(Robert Martin, UNCRPD Committee Member, from his address to Inclusion International Conference, Birmingham 2018)

Students with disabilities face many challenges in life. Effective schooling is one of them. A third of school-aged boys, girls, and adolescents that are out of school have a disability;[22] keeping both education systems is incompatible with what is set forth in GC4 and the costs for keeping both systems are economically unsustainable in developing countries.

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Box 6. The most important figures [33] [34]

Registration in primary education in developing countries has reached **91%**.

Even so, **57 million** primary-aged boys/girls are still out of school.

One out of four girls does not attend school in developing countries.

Approximately half, **50%**, of all primary-aged non-schooled boys/girls
live in areas affected by conflicts.

103 million young individuals lack basic literacy skills, and more than
60% of them are women.

6 out of each 10 boys/girls and adolescents are not attaining a minimum level
of competence in reading and mathematics worldwide.

It is now widely accepted that the most appropriate schooling for students with disabilities is in a common learning setting in the community school.[23] In short, they are best served in inclusive schools.[24] The basis for this assertion is a matter of equity and human rights, as well as pedagogical practice, and sound public policy.[25]

The relevance of equity and human rights to inclusive schooling are clear. The United Nations CRPD (Article 24)[26] makes the most compelling and well-known case for inclusive education. However, there are many national human rights acts and education acts and policies that back this up.[27] Some have been recognized internationally as models for promoting inclusion.[28]

Most important for individual students are the pedagogical benefits of inclusive education practices. When boys, girls with disabilities go to school with their siblings to the community school and participate fully in the learning and social activities with their peers, the outcomes are positive. The whole point of 'inclusion' is for the child to be part of the social network of peers. This can only be achieved in the community school.[29]

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Students with intellectual disabilities benefit from inclusion in very practical ways.[30] Research has shown that students who learn in inclusive school settings make greater academic progress, acquire more appropriate communication and social skills, and most importantly, have the opportunity to develop the 'social capital' they will need with peers. This 'social capital' can only be secured if inclusion happens consistently over many years in settings where a child can become part of a community of peers.

Finally, inclusion is sound public policy. It allows public authorities to develop coherent policies that focus on serving boys and girls in the school their siblings of the same age attend. The focus of policy is on strengthening those schools, not on setting up elaborate alternatives that are far too often underfunded and ineffective[31]

Every investment that strengthens inclusion in a school has the potential to strengthen the school for all learners32. Resources are pushed into the school to support students and their teachers, rather than withdrawn into a stand-alone alternative. This approach makes sense in terms of public policy.

What does the legislation say?

Based on the reports of the initiative partners, the reports in the region, and the work of the Catalyst for Inclusive Education, it is acknowledged that some Latin American countries have made important efforts aimed at reviewing the policies and legislation on education so they evidence concordance with what is set forth in CRPD's Art. 24 (Box 7) but there are huge voids in terms of understanding GC4 and its implication in practices.

A more detailed analysis of policies identified as more progressive in the region show that they have elements that are distant from the previously developed concept of inclusive education. Some of them are formulated from and for people with disabilities and not from the General Education Law. In other countries there are different approaches in relation to general education, inclusive education, and special education; there is training for teachers from the perspective of disability thus evidencing glaring gaps between conceptualization and practices.

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Box 7. Progressive Education-related legislation in Latin America [35]

- **Colombia – Decree 1421 of 2017**

- **Paraguay – 2013 Inclusive Education Law**

- **Uruguay – Inclusion Protocol for persons with disabilities in education centers, 2017**

- **Brazil – Brazilian Inclusion Law, 2015**

- **Peru – Law 30797, June 19, 2018**

Having an education policy and laws that promote inclusive education as a response to all its students, including those who have any impairment, does not lead to the transformation of the current reality faced by people with disabilities and their families. There are many barriers for them to have access to, participate, stay, succeed, and learn at regular schools.

The language of policies does not guarantee that their implications will be understood and implemented by the different actors responsible for the education system. There is little understanding and visualization of what happens at an inclusive school and classroom with qualified teachers whose practices promote inclusion. This was reported in the World Report of Inclusion International, Better Education for All – When We're Included Too,[36] in which participants of focus groups supported the language of the Convention and Education for All. However, they had questions about how an inclusive classroom and school would function as well as what practices teachers could use to promote inclusion.

As already identified, there are huge gaps between what the law says and what happens in practice:

- A legal framework in which old provisions that remain are contrary to conceptual progress and become obstacles.

- Inclusive education may be established within legislation for persons with disabilities rather than being system-wide.

- Lack of procedures and processes that guarantee the implementation of good practices.

- No implementation plans.

These are discrepancies that appear to be promoted not because of bad intentions but because of the ignorance expressed [37]by governments, on the part of professionals, family organizations, persons with disabilities and their families in relation to the elements that would promote an inclusive education system. That is why beyond policy/legislation there are great needs related to

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the practices in order for implementation to occur. There is the need to harmonize the legislation from all the systems -including health, education, social protection, employment- and to adjust protocols and procedures within the education system in order to achieve quality education that is inclusive and with equality for all in the region.

> As an example, America a School for All,[38] an initiative of Desclab, suggests litigation strategies based on the identification of legal barriers that may be a model for other countries.

Debates and Studies in the Region

There have been diagnoses of the obstacles and challenges to achieving inclusive education in the region from different perspectives and groups that, in general, have been accompanied by recommendations that have rarely been implemented in a systemic and systematic manner.

Civil organizations representing persons with disabilities have been ineffective in transforming exclusion and the education models that segregate or integrate. The need for radical change towards inclusive education is acknowledged, but these organizations lack conceptual clarity concerning what inclusive education is and its benefits, along with a lack of leadership and organization to influence the quality of education that responds to the needs of diverse students. Inertia favours those who prefer the status quo, have beliefs and attitudes based on old paradigms and beliefs, that have decision-making roles, as well as others that, due to their work, have interests and benefit from the current educational models. Some of the debates in the region are identified below.

When the United Nations Committee analyzed the reports vis-à-vis the compliance with Article 24 of the CRPD, submitted by 18 countries of the Americas between 2012 and 2018, it listed common concerns and recommendations as follows:[39]

Table 1. Compliance with Article 24 – CRPD for 18 American countries.

CONCERNS	RECOMMENDATIONS
1. Persistence of segregated education models towards people with disabilities. 2. Predominance of special education with evaluations based on the impairment of the persons. 3. High number of students with disabilities in special education. 4. Postponement of a comprehensive policy towards inclusive education.	1. Planning the transition towards inclusive quality education at all levels, including tertiary education, training teachers, and having the necessary supports and resources. 2. Designing and implementing a plan with goals and deadlines set so students of special schools join inclusive schools; in addition, providing reasonable adjustments in the education system even when a high level of support is needed. 3. Allocating enough budgetary resources.

5. Lack of efforts from the authorities to promote inclusive education.
6. Lack of or insufficient investment.
7. Lack of transition plans from a segregating system to an inclusive system.
8. Use of terminology that reflects the medical model of disability for classifying the education levels.
9. Low registration levels of students with disabilities in rural areas, indigenous peoples, those with psycho-social or intellectual disability, deaf-blind, or with multiple disabilities.
10. Lack of a teaching Professional Development
11. Plan and/or training.
12. Keeping initial teacher training from the perspective of segregated special education by promoting the continuity of segregation against inclusive education.
13. Persistence of discriminatory behaviors: non admission, additional payments.
14. Lack of reasonable adjustments, including material with accessible formats.
15. Lack of accessible school settings. Insufficient data.

4. Carrying out awareness and diverse culture promotion-related campaigns.
5. Starting up administrative and judicial mechanisms for forbidding, supervising, and sanctioning discrimination due to disabilities in public and private systems.
6. Guaranteeing inclusion through the law, including a non-refusal clause.
7. Implementing teacher training policies on inclusive education and the rights of persons with disabilities.
8. Guaranteeing accessibility, reasonable adjustments, and supports.
9. Implementing the inclusive education models for people with disabilities at the tertiary education level.
10. Using GC4 as a guideline as well as sustainable development targets 4.1, 4.5, and 4.8 of the SDGs.
11. Modifying education terminology and classification reflected by the medical model.

Report of the Regional Network for Inclusive Education in Latin America - RREI [40]

The Regional Network for Inclusive Education in Latin America,[41] RREI, is a coalition of organizations of and for persons with disabilities, relatives, and human rights of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. The RREI works for the right of persons with disabilities to receive inclusive education in a school for all. Its goal is to exercise influence, politically speaking, at the national, regional and international levels so States guarantee the right of all persons to inclusive education. This Network carried out an analysis of the barriers faced by inclusive education in eight countries with the following results: [42]

Table 2. Barriers against Inclusive Education in 8 Latin American Countries

PROGRESS
• There are regulatory frameworks in Paraguay, Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay.
• More mobilization of persons with disabilities and their families in order to demand the fulfillment of education.
• The topic is included in the public agenda and there is more visualization of discrimination situations through the media.

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BARRIERS AS CHALLENGES

- Regulatory frameworks against inclusive education.
- The system reproduces a model that separates and excludes.
- Registration refusal.
- Enrolled in rehabilitation institutions – medical model.
- Compulsive referral to special schools or private organizations, frequently against the will of the persons involved.
- Lack of supports and reasonable adjustments, depending on each school, insufficient human resources to provide support, bureaucratization of formalities to obtain them and external supports paid by the families.
- Unprepared human resources.
- There is integration but not inclusion.
- Parallel curricula with less quality, low expectations, and poor academic results.
- Exclusive classroom within the regular school.
- Lack of responsibility for students with disabilities on the part of classroom teachers.
- No adjustments in teaching and evaluation strategies.
- No learning or participation.
- Higher levels of grade repetition, drop-out rates, and greater age.
- Lack of equal certification; they get differentiated degrees that do not accredit level completion.
- Lack of training on inclusive education of the staff of regular schools.
- Lack of control and complaint mechanisms.
- Lack of understanding on the part of public servants concerning what inclusive education is.
- Lack of data on the education of persons with disabilities.

VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE REGION

- It is systemic and structural.

- It prevents the enjoyment of other rights.

- It hinders inclusion in other settings and future settings.

Other sources of regional information came from the debate on inclusive education that took place recently at the *Consulta Pública - Unidad sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos in Lima,* on June 22, 2018[43] and the challenges identified by Catalyst for Inclusive Education while working in the region during the last years.

Public Consultation – Disability Rights Unit - IACHR

The work group in the Public Consultation reiterated, once more, that in Latin America and the Caribbean, persons with disabilities experience systematically the violation of their right to education. They identify the following attitudinal, cultural, political, economic, and physical barriers preventing them from accessing quality education and taking part on equal conditions along with people without disabilities:[44]

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Public Consultation – Disability Rights Unit - IACHR

ATTITUDINAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND PHYSICAL BARRIERS

1. Prevalence of rules derived from the medical-rehabilitation approach that have not been adapted to the obligations imposed by international law.

2. Persons with disabilities are prevented from enrolling in general schools: schools select boys, girls, and adolescents and refuse the registration because of disabilities. Exclusion increases as education levels are higher; therefore, very few persons with disabilities can complete secondary education and go to university.

3. Lack of adjustments, physical and communication accessibility.

4. In particular, the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to guarantee that persons with disabilities learn on equal conditions so the gap widens.

5. Boys, girls, and adolescents are subject to the discretion of schools and the level of perseverance of the families.

6. Usually, the different sectors with influence on the education of persons with disabilities are not articulated and disregard their role; this results in referrals to special schools, high levels of drop-out rates and grade repetition.

7. Lack of equal certification: the persons that take their studies with supports and reasonable adjustments do not receive degrees or receive degrees of lesser value that do not allow them to continue studying or join the workforce.

8. Lack of teacher training on education for diversity, both during their initial preparation and during their professional practice: teachers resist implementing tools for education for diversity arguing that they have not been trained for that. In addition, the fact that their performance depends on their students learning certain standardized content deepens this resistance.

9. Prevalence of the medical-rehabilitation model and a focus on characteristics perceived as deficiencies. The medical model and the deficit approach are part of the mentality of the families, teachers, and public servants; it also guides the actions of all those that influence education processes. There are many prejudices, and even today they are seen as objects of charity and not as subjects of law; the perspective of disability must be cross-cutting to all public policies.

10. Lack of independent complaint mechanisms that are accessible, safe, fast, and effective in order to question these situations and revert discrimination due to disability-related reasons in the educational milieu.

11. Lack of participation of persons with disabilities and their families in education processes; their voices are overshadowed.

12. Lack of sufficient, adequate, and detailed statistical information that hinders designing policies and measuring progress in the implementation of the Convention; this illustrates the low priority these groups are given through public policies. It is also perceived that academic research on inclusive education is lacking.

13. Inadequate budgetary allocation: resources are allocated in order to support segregated settings and not for supporting institutional abilities and transforming educational systems.

14. Lastly, it is worth keeping in mind that Latin America and the Caribbean is a region with multiple inequalities (persons affected by poverty, gender-related situations, migrants, indigenous communities, urban and rural environments) that affect the rights of persons with disabilities in a negative manner.

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International Organizations: an example – Inter-American Development Bank

International organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the World Bank, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have made statements about the education crisis worldwide. The IADB has highlighted the existence of three main challenges for the Latin American region:

- *Challenge 1.* **The learning and skills of Latin American students are very low: "The main challenge of education in the region: low, unequal, and little relevant learning obtained by their students."**

- *Challenge 2.* **Inequality due to the socioeconomic level in the learning and student skills of the region is significant: "The poorest students have a performance of around 2.5 years of schooling below their richest peers in the PISA test. The students of the region with better performance obtain scores lower than those of students with the worst performance in Singapore."**

- *Challenge 3.* **The learning and skills are inadequate in relation to the new social demands: "The socioemotional skills are the most valued ones by employers…"**

However, it does not refer, at any time, to students with disabilities and their academic and learning achievements. Then, it is worth asking, what would happen if the IADB applied the same commitment to SDG 4, equality, quality, and inclusion, in its analyses of the current challenges and the prerequisites for success?

Catalyst for Inclusive Education [45]

Catalyst for Inclusive Education is an II initiative aimed at generating a worldwide knowledge network for inclusive education with the ability to respond, in real time, to the issues and opportunities identified by its member organizations which:

- *Shares knowledge;*

- *Mobilizes* **the technical experience of the associates to promote the inclusive education policy and practice around the world;**

- *Builds* **the leadership and abilities of its members at the local level;**

- *Supports* **the development of strategic plans and offers ongoing mentoring; and,**

- *Provides* **a standard concerning materials on inclusive quality education policies and practices for all.**

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Through the work carried out during the last two years, the response to the initiative is proof of the commitment of II members; it has allowed understanding some of the systemic barriers for the transformation of education systems towards inclusive education in concordance with GC4 which, in turn, responds to the conceptualization and implications of inclusive education under identical II parameters and principles.

Current challenges and dilemmas, essentially in the Americas, have been identified from the government and the civil society for the implementation of inclusive education in the practice of the region based on consultations, missions to countries, documents issued, and international conferences; also, based on the work with international organizations involved in influencing sustainable development as well as through dialogue and reflection with local entities and II members at the country level.

Table 4. Challenges and Dilemmas for implementing Inclusive Education in the Americas

CHALLENGES	ISSUES TO SOLVE
1. Little understanding concerning what is needed in order to achieve an inclusive system.	1. World discussions on the Education Crisis and the need to improve the quality of education are not taking inclusion and equality into account.
2. The approach focuses on the school level, not on the reform and systemic transformation.	2. Inclusive education must be found in the general education policy but not in policies related to disabilities.
3. Some members focus on access to school.	3. Understanding, designing, and implementing the Curriculum.
4. Some members focus on the transformation of existing segregated systems.	4. Teacher training is erroneously focusing on disabilities.
5. Some members focus on boys, girls, and adolescents who are currently out of school.	5. The debate on special schools and their role in inclusive education.
6. Most of the work focuses on intellectual disabilities but not on total inclusion.	6. Specific classrooms in educational settings, a solution or part of the problem?
7. There are members that attempt to influence changing policies without full knowledge on the topic.	7. Specialists and their role in inclusive education.
8. Governments have adopted the rhetoric of inclusion but not the plans.	8. Specialization of professionals for inclusion
9. Most officials ignore CRPD and GC4.	9. Learning results of students with disabilities are not measured.
10. The work on inclusive education is fragmented at the national level.	10. Literacy levels are low in students with disabilities.
11. II members seek ongoing technical support.	
12. II members have dynamic leaders committed to achieving change.	

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11. **The bureaucracy of the system for allowing the implementation of reasonable adjustments.**

12. **The conceptualization of Inclusive Education is not always clear among the different actors of education; it is worrisome when it is between leaders and the other members in the countries of said organizations: for example, leaders and heads of international organizations and their official country models (for example, UNICEF, the World Bank, IADB, and USAID), organizations that work from the perspective of sustainable development (for example, HI, CBM, HRW, including also family-based civil organizations, as well as those with regional characteristics.**

13. **Inclusive education and the challenges for responding to fluency in their mother tongue for deaf individuals.**

14. **Learning results / Standardized Tests / PISA / Inclusive Education Indicators.**

15. **Family dilemmas: opinions in favor and against inclusive education.**

16. **Families demand options (including segregation) for them to choose from.**

Consultations carried out around these topics have put to the test the structure and the global human resources of Catalyst for Inclusive Education evidencing significant efforts to respond to requests from our members for practical assistance to deal with day to day challenges faced in school.

Indicators, Barriers, and Progress towards Inclusive Education

Several studies have identified barriers to implementation of inclusive education as well as elements which contribute and indicators of success. These indicators are part of the Country Profile Survey in Education, developed for the project, in order to verify information regarding education of school-aged boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities, as the country profiles covered the themes of Education as a Human Right, the Right to Inclusive Education, Political and Legislative Structure, and a Situational Analysis of the System, School Practices, Quality Education and Partnerships.

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These elements can help to identify the difficulties in the process of moving towards inclusive education in relation to aspects such as eliminating legal and political barriers, the development of a more accessible general education system, and the participation and education of the family and community in the process.

> The exercise of responding to the survey took more time than expected given the level of disaggregation, dispersion, and updating of the information in Paraguay. Responding to the survey gave us additional benefits by helping us to discover more documentary sources than we had previously known about. (A comment from Saraki Foundation).

The following summary contextualizes the consultation; it includes each one of the three countries (Peru, Colombia, and Paraguay) in terms of the characteristics of the education system and the progress towards inclusive education, along with the data on the situation of persons with disabilities in the school system, based on the experience and the work of the partner organizations.

Situation and barriers to Inclusive Education in the Peruvian Education System

The General Education Law of Peru (Law No. 28044, 2003) promotes an inclusive approach and aims to guarantee the right to quality education of all students, highlighting that at the national level each boy and girl has the right to the availability, access to quality education, permanence in the education system, and to achieve learning and skills that enable him/her to face human development challenges, exercise their citizenship, and continue learning throughout their life.

The State has the following obligations in relation to these rights: affordability, accessibility, adaptability, and acceptability. Inclusion is defined in the same Law as a principle of education that includes persons with disabilities, excluded, marginalized, and vulnerable groups, particularly in rural areas regardless of ethnic background, religion, sex or any cause for discrimination and inequality. It also states that special education is provided with the goal of including students in regular classrooms notwithstanding the complementary and personalized attention they require (Art. 39).

The scope of this Law was recently broadened through the Inclusive Education Law (Law No. 39797) which states, firstly, that education is inclusive in all its stages, types, modalities, levels and cycles;

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secondly, it states that educational institutions should adopt measures aimed at guaranteeing accessibility, availability, acceptability, and adaptability in the provision of education services; thirdly, it states that the State guarantees the creation and implementation of education support services in order to work along inclusive education, by developing awareness, training and consultancy-related actions for the education community in relation to working with diversity, notwithstanding the specialized personnel for inclusive education; it also sets forth that inclusive education does not generate additional costs to boys and girls with special education needs by applying the right to non discrimination and equality of educational opportunities.

Likewise, the General Law on Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 29973, 2012) guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to receive quality education, under an inclusive approach that responds to their needs and potential within the framework of effective equal opportunities. The Ministry of Education is responsible for regulating, promoting, supervising, controlling, and guaranteeing their registration at the public and private education institutions of the different stages, modalities, and levels of the national education system.

To conclude, Strategic Objective No. 01 of the National Education Project for 2012 (CNE, 2006) intends to provide opportunities and results of equal quality for all; Strategic Objective No. 02 aims at thirteen years of good education without exclusions.

Situation of persons with disabilities in the Peruvian education system

The National Specialized Survey on Disabilities (ENEDIS, 2012), states that 5.2% of the national population has a disability and that 162,266 persons are minors. Regrettably, a high percentage of students with disabilities do not have access to any of the modalities of the Peruvian Basic Education (Regular, Special, and Alternative), and many of those who have access are prevented from enjoying their right to quality education due to a number of different factors.

Some data that allow measuring this situation are detailed below:

- *Attendance of minors with disabilities in school:* 54% of persons with disabilities do not have access to schooling (while at the national level this percentage is 94% for those without disabilities). In detail, 62.8% of the persons with disabilities, aged between 3 and 5, do not attend any education center; the same happens with 36.9% between 6 and 11 years of age. Likewise, 49.2% of the adolescents between 12 and 17 do not attend school, while an alarming 85.9% of those over 18 years old (until 24) do not attend any education center. Thus, it is evidenced that the percentage of boys and girls with disabilities out of the education system increases as they get older.

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- *Education level of persons with disabilities:* 62 out of each 100 persons have an education level lower than the secondary level; out of these, 40.4% are at the primary level, and 22.3% do not have any education level. In relation to other levels, 22.4% has secondary education, 6.7% tertiary education, and 4.7% higher non-university education.

- *Literacy index of persons with disabilities:* 26.5% of persons with disabilities over 15 years of age do not know how to write or read; the percentage that corresponds to women is 33.6% representing twice the percentage of men (18.6%). 19.8% live in urban settings and 51.3% in rural settings. Concerning women living in rural areas, this percentage is 65.6% in comparison with 6.3% of the general population.

Despite the fact that the population excluded from the education system comprises not only students with disabilities, the figures of Report No. 66918-PE of the World Bank and of the National Institute of Statistics and Computing (INEI) (2012) are alarming: 9% of the indigenous population (between 6 and 11 years of age) are out of school, while 39% of children with disabilities live the same situation. On the other hand, in relation to students between 12 and 17 years of age, only 50% of those with disabilities attend school, while this figure is 83% in the population whose mother tongue is Quechua and Aymara, and up to 65% in the case of students of the Amazon region.

One of the most recent statistical figures on the schooling of students with disabilities is reported in the 2016 School Census; it identifies that there are 93,269 students with disabilities included in the education system: 70.6% are enrolled in regular schools, 17.2% in special schools, and 3.2% in Early Intervention Programs - PRITE.

The Ministry of Education suggests that the accompaniment and consultancy provided to educational institutions that enroll students with disabilities should be provided through the Advice and Support Service for Education Needs – *(Servicio de Apoyo y Asesoramiento para la Atención de Necesidades Educativas – SSANEE)* which is made up of teachers without classrooms in charge of the Special Education Centers *(Centros de Educación Especial – CEBE).*

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education conducted a study in 2016 on the activities of the SAANEE, highlighting a great number of aspects that need to be improved and taken care of; among them, it underlines the lack of training of the specialists that make it up and the lack of coverage in Regular Basic Education, Alternative Education, and Technical-Productive Education institutions. It is a cause for concern to note that, out of 65,000 students with disabilities enrolled in Regular Basic Education, approximately 10,000 receive support from the SAANEE team at their institution since there are only 287 teams at the national level (DEBE, 2017).

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In 2017, the Citizenship Dialogues for Inclusive Education, a consultation process carried out by the SPSD, involving the actors that participate at different levels of inclusion processes in school settings contributed by offering recommendations to the policy for working in school settings with persons with disabilities.

What does the legislation say? [46]

Peru was the first Latin-American country to ratify the CRPD, in December 2007, and it has made pioneering legal progress in terms of its content and scope in the Latin American region. They have not been able to achieve the transformational impact that would impact day to day practice since the barriers explained below still exist; these barriers impede change, while entrenching segregated education systems for a number of reasons.

- The *Human Factor,* considered as the greatest obstacle, involves or affects several aspects ranging from prejudice, misinformation, stigmatization, and erroneous imaginary scenarios concerning the skills of persons with disabilities to the lack of academic information and specific pedagogical skills allowing educators to value the diversity of students and their requirements for academic progress and social interaction.

- When this barrier is present through the directors, teachers, students without disabilities or their families, the institutional environment becomes adverse to inclusive education; there are more obstacles and requirements against access to education; isolation is favored, as well as segregation and bullying, leading students with disabilities and their families to leave the inclusive education system and to look for segregated options they perceive as more tolerant; if they don't find them, they leave the school milieu for good.

- *Lack of information or erroneous misconceptions concerning disabilities at the community level and even within the families of the students with disabilities;* in most cases, linked to diagnoses and medical recommendations of therapeutic personnel that lead to low expectations in terms of improvement or progress rather than considering individualized special education and therapies. As a consequence, inclusion in the regular school, even with specific supports, is considered a waste of time which leads to frustration, emotional damage, and the worsening of the condition.

- *Low development, scope, and effectiveness of the support and consultancy services for the inclusion of persons with disabilities at the education centers.* This turns their existence into a factor that limits the possibilities of students with disabilities to have access to, stay, and learn within the inclusive education system in a successful manner.

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- *Deficient situations of most of the education institutions of the public sector in terms of facilities, furnishings, support personnel, and differentiated educational materials* making it difficult to develop quality learning, the use of services and premises, the mobility and social interaction of students with disabilities thus leading to drop-out situations.

- *Disagreement of the parents with the changes in the education system thus limiting the access or permanence of their sons and daughters at the inclusive education institutions* since they feel safer at institutions with a segregation-oriented approach that guarantees the individualized personal care of their sons and daughters, and settings that are more amicable where, as thought by them, they can feel safe from becoming victims of discrimination or mistreatment.

- *Loss or decrease of perception of the right of persons with disabilities to their right to inclusive education services whose exercise must be enforceable before the official entities and guaran*teed by their families for their relative who has a disability. As complexity increases in the education levels and, particularly, when transitioning from primary to secondary education, this perception is lost or decreases, and both the families and the students with disabilities leave the inclusive education setting and even all types of schooling.

SPSD's suggestions

Although the goal of the research work developed was to make recommendations to overcome or suppress the obstacles that are currently perceived by boys, girls, and adolescents, with disabilities or not, as well as their families, for the access, permanence, and learning in the inclusive education system, it was deemed convenient to complement the findings obtained during the research work vis-à-vis those derived from the own expertise of SPSD and, from that perspective, including SPSD's suggestions concerning certain actions they consider could be carried out by the government and civil society to suppress the obstacles that are still against the full implementation of the inclusive education system officially adopted and defined in the Peruvian educational legal framework.

Designing a communication and impact plan that fosters changing social stereotypes and false impressions about disabilities and accepting diversity as a personal characteristic that must be respected and considered as a valuable contribution to social fabric in a democratic society. This communication and impact plan should lead to a substantial and measurable change regarding how social participation and the education of persons with disabilities are understood pursuant to national and international legislation.

Evaluating the design, implementation, and operation of the **SAANEE** to prove that it is adequate and, if necessary, make all the appropriate corrections, and then proceed to strengthen it to fulfill

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the purpose for which it was created: optimizing the educational opportunities of persons with disabilities in regular schools.

Developing work plans within the education institutions that allow the active inclusion of families in the development of individual educational plans of their sons and daughters, as well as developing educational and interactive processes at the institutional level. This would allow generating peer exchange spaces on the difficulties, successes, strengths and challenges derived from inclusion and their impact on the life of the students and the future of the institutions, improving expectations both for teachers and directors and families in relation to the progress and learning of students, as well as shared work with all the actors as per attaining the goals and overcoming the challenges of the entire educational community.

Having pre-service and in-service training of teachers for the diverse education of the students, including different learning styles in all the educational modalities and levels, not only for those interacting directly with students in the classroom but also for those assuming responsibilities in the local administration. This would enable promotion and distribution of the various duties related to inclusive education, as well as promote more effective supervisory and support roles in the process.

Designing and implementing educational processes for a more effective and efficient professional performance of teachers and educational administrators that take part in the field of inclusive education by keeping an ongoing active search for opportunities for pedagogical improvement and growth at the pedagogical, teaching, and personal levels.

Devoting a great deal of the effort of the civil society organizations to working with the families and persons with disabilities so as to generate a clear perception of inclusive education as an enforceable **RIGHT** whose exercise must be fostered by the families and assumed by the students while contributing with all their skills. Besides being still committed to the work coordinated with the same education-related official entities, guiding and supporting all changes that must take place to implement inclusive education in the country once and for all.

Situation and Barriers to Inclusive Education in the Colombian Education System.

The report is based on the information provided for the submission of the Country Report to the CRPD Committee by the Colombian State and by civil society in an alternative report in 2016.

Colombian Coalition for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Coalition is made up of networks of organizations of persons with disabilities, organizations of persons with disabilities, and their families, networks of organizations of transgender individuals,

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academic institutions, human rights organizations, service rendering organizations, and independent activists who identify themselves as persons with disabilities, as trans people, as relatives of persons with disabilities, and as human rights activists.

The purpose of their report was to offer evidence to the CRPD Committee concerning the perspective of the civil society in terms of the compliance of the Colombian State with the CRPD which would be submitting its report on the measures adopted for its implementation.

Initial Report on the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Colombia

The report includes the actions carried out by the Colombian State during the period between August 1, 2009, and April 30, 2013. It reports the Legislative measures adopted, the resources allocated, and the limitations faced in view of its compliance.

Several actors were consulted during its preparation:

- Institutions of the Colombian State.

- Organizations of and for Persons with disabilities.

- Representatives of the Civil Society.

- Entities that do not have direct participation in the National Disability System (Sistema Nacional de Discapacidad - SND) at the department, district, and municipal levels).

Information was collected through various mechanisms including formal meetings, teleconferences, consultation processes, and accessible online forms.

Barriers identified by the Coalition in the Inclusive Education processes [47]

Colombia has been a pioneering country in the Latin American region because it has started regulatory processes and a legal framework aimed at turning the education system from a traditional model (mostly aimed at homogenization and segregation) into more modern ways of acquiring knowledge in settings that favor integration, now moving towards inclusive systems at a slower and more unconvincing pace than desirable, but firmly aimed at achieving educational settings that offer, at all times, spaces for generating inclusive knowledge that responds to the different requirements of boys, girls, and adolescents.

This statement, which could seem unjustified, may be validated by analyzing the rules enacted by the Ministry of National Education at the beginning of the 1990s when, long before the adoption of

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the CRPD and its being ratified by the country, inclusive education was spoken of as the suitable type of education to be adopted by a system for all boys, girls, and adolescents.

However, the reality desired by the legislature could not be put into practice then, and not even now within the reality of the country and the day to day life of boys, girls, and adolescents due to different reasons that have been identified after a thorough analysis of the following documents:

- *Alternative report of the Colombian coalition for the implementation of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*[48]

- *A School for All, Outlook and challenges of the right to inclusive education of the persons with disabilities in Colombia*[49]

- *Recommendations made to the Country included in the document with the final remarks to the Report submitted in 2016 by the Colombian State to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Situation of the persons with disabilities in the Colombian education system[50]

- *The 2015 Census reports the population of persons with disabilities at 6.19%.*

- *Close to 3.14% of the school-aged population (6-24 years) have a disability. It is possible that there is a sub-record as a result of the difficulties concerning the acknowledgement of disabilities within the family. The report of students with disabilities at the SIMAT continues being a priority.*

- *At least 135,000 school-aged persons with disabilities could be excluded from regular education; registration should be over 320,000 students with disabilities. Students with intellectual or cognitive disabilities represent the largest group of enrolled students (52.8%), other disabilities 12.1%, and psycho-social disabilities 8.8%. In many cases, under this type of disability there are other learning-related situations such as dyslexia, Attention Disorders, and Hyperactivity, among others.*

- *Gender gap: 61.6% of students with disabilities enrolled are boys and 38.4% are girls and women.*

- *Geographical gaps in the registration: success in the inclusive education of persons with disabilities is geographically diverse. Some of the departments that are more developed in socioeconomic terms have a better performance; nevertheless, the performance of some capital cities is poor and they are overshadowed by other outstanding mid-sized cities.*

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● *The number of students with disabilities in education has increased gradually during the last years: from 156,600 boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities recorded, that correspond to 1.21% of the students enrolled in 2014, it came to 1.34% in 2015 and, for year 2016, the figure reported is 1.8% which totals 183,203 students.*

Identified barriers[51]

● *The prevailing confusion in the education system concerning the concept of Inclusive Education and the coexistence of segregated educational offers. The proliferation of institutions that do not respond to the concept of Inclusive Education, clearly established in the CRPD and in GC4, exists both in the public and the private sectors but it is more frequent in the private sector.*

● *The government continues being indulgent concerning the existence and operation of educational institutions that, even under apparently inclusive structures, really offer special education; the foregoing, despite the positive evolution of the Colombian legal framework.*

● *The support classrooms that operate at the schools with official budgets and financing, called inclusive in theory, have become spaces for segregation within these apparently inclusive institutions. The classrooms do not correspond to the original plan of the legislation that designed them as a "set of services, strategies, and resources offered by the institutions to provide support (…) that allows the comprehensive care of students with disabilities in relation to their skills or with exceptional talents."*

● *Lack of sanctions and rejection of discrimination due to disabilities in the school milieu. Colombia has typified discrimination for disabilities as a crime; nevertheless, claims derived from discrimination in the school settings, even in the cases in which access or the necessary adjustments are denied (which the law also considers discrimination), are scarce and are always brought by individuals although it is an offense that can be dealt with ex officio -that is, through an initiative of the State and before the government agencies providing education services. It is before these agencies that most of the complaints are filed due to a refusal to enroll students with disabilities at regular centers as well as due to other actions that are discriminatory. The role of the official sector is ineffective in relation to this situation.*

This lack of state action for suppressing discriminatory offenses carried out in the public and private sectors could be explained if taking into account that most of the boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities who are institutionalized under the protection of the government

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that are part of proceedings for the restitution of their rights, are not being schooled and that, in most of the cases, the education services they have access to belong to the so-called special education.

- *The Childhood and Adolescence Code compiles all the applicable legislation for minors in Colombia that keeps supporting the existence of Special Education. Although there is more generalized support for inclusive education in legal entities related to the exercise of the right to education in Colombia, and they have become more and more harmonized with Article 24 of the CRPD and GC4, other legal instruments like the Childhood and Adolescence Code do not go along this line. Their provisions authorize the National Government, departments, and municipalities to enter into agreements with public and private entities with the purpose of guaranteeing health care and access to special education to boys, girls, and adolescents with congenital conditions or any type of disability: the existence of rules like these is an important barrier because they strengthen stereotypes concerning the need and convenience for persons with disabilities to exercise their right to education in segregated settings that respond more to the medical approach to disability than to the rights-oriented approach.*

- *The access of boys, girls, and adolescents is greatly blocked due to the lack of reliable and relevant information on the number and characteristics of the boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities, allowing the State to have well-designed Public Policies and, as a consequence, being able to plan the support offer and eventually necessary transformations in an adequate manner for providing an inclusive educational service throughout the national territory.*

- *The integrated registration system (SIMAT) issues information on the number of boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities enrolled, but the information is affected by issues related to Sub-enrollment or Over-enrollment. The latter arises from the inclusion of boys, girls, and adolescents that have learning, behavioral, or psychosocial difficulties in schools that have not been diagnosed as disabilities; they are not registered as persons with disabilities although they require personalized attention and the use of pedagogical support.*

- *The lack of information on the part of the families and the lack of support services that allow them to acknowledge education as a right of their sons and daughters; guaranteeing this right is a duty of the State but they are also responsible to ensure that their son or daughter exercises this right under the terms of the CRPD.*

  Even when the fathers and mothers are aware that they can demand the Right to Education, they do not have clear and sufficient information on how they can exercise it and the paths to follow for the registration of their sons and daughters at a regular and inclusive education

institution where they can study with their siblings, neighbors, and friends while having the support types that may be necessary for their entry, permanence, and progress.

● *The jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court and the existence of rules for legal interpretation with incorrect approaches in relation to the enjoyment of the Right to Education of boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities have given rise to an important precedent that has led to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the educational system by choosing special and segregated offers while denying the right to inclusive education although the families have legal instruments that can be used for demanding the right to education in an inclusive setting for their sons and daughters such as the protection of fundamental rights under the constitution (Tutela).*

Box 8. Complaint before the Colombian Constitutional Court the right to inclusive education

In Colombia, despite the existence of progressive legislation within the framework of inclusive education, DescLAb **(https://www.desclab.com/educacion)** inclusiva has analyze d the rules that have regulated and regulate this right in a critical manner and in order to reconstruct the path followed to achieve the right to inclusive education.

On June 16, 2017, it file d a complaint before the Colombian Constitutional Court to protect the right to inclusive education of persons with disabilities, seeking to have the Colombian Constitutional Court:

• Protect the right to inclusive education of persons with disabi lities pursuant to the provisions of article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
• Declare special education unconstitutional and establish that segregated education is a human rights violation and a type of dis crimination.
• Establish the right of all persons, regardless of their disabilities, to receive supports, reasonable adjustments, and affirmative actions aimed at guaranteeing their inclusion and participation at regular schools.

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- *Most teachers have been part of University curricula in which they had to decide if they wanted to be trained in the so-called "special education" or regular training and now are facing a challenge they had not chosen and for which they don't feel prepared or motivated: they refuse to admit boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities in their classes, or, if they cannot prevent this from happening, they accept them in the classroom but they do not include them in the educational processes of the classes.*

- *Even in the cases in which the teachers and the administrative staff of the academic institutions are willing to evolve towards educational plans for inclusive education, most of them don't have a training offer that provides pedagogical tools to face this transformation successfully.*

- *The pedagogical support teams and the resource centers for inclusive education, when available and operating, do so only in large cities and in a very experimental manner; they are insufficient for the great demand required by boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities in rural areas or far from the decision-making administrative center.*

- *There are barriers within the schools that affect the incorporation and permanence of boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities which reflect preconceptions and prejudices present at all levels of society that are not alien to the families of other boys, girls, and adolescents (occasionally, also the parents of those that have another disability), teacher sectors, classmates and, in general, all the members of the educational community. The following are evaluation mistakes that cause harm and prevent boys, girls, and adolescents from exercising their right to education:*

  - **Disabilities seen as a probably contagious disease.**

  - **Disabilities as a factor that prevents learning; therefore, all or most persons with disabilities cannot be educated.**

  - **The diversity generated by disabilities is seen as a risk for homogenization processes considered to be intrinsic for schooling; generating equal skills and knowledge for groups of homogeneous students being it ideal that content, goals, and learning rhythms are followed and met by everyone.**

  - **Statements suggesting that boys, girls, and adolescents act with cruelty against their classmates who have disabilities, besides the fact that teachers do little as well as the staff of schools to transform imaginary scenarios and negative attitudes; this could be a potentially aggressive element against the vulnerability of boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities. They can only feel at ease and happy in protected environments and among their peers; that is, with other boys, girls, and adolescents who have disabilities.**

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- *The prejudices that exist in families regarding masculine and feminine roles, and the importance of instruction or education of women becomes a challenge for inclusive education for all. If accessing regular education is difficult, and in many cases impossible for a boy, girl, or adolescent with a disability living in an urban area, it is much more of an obstacle for girls with disabilities whose presence in inclusive education is notoriously inferior in relation to that of boys.*

- *Few possibilities to access educational services and those shown as inclusive for boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities living in a rural environment or in urban areas of territories located far from the administrative center of the country or with lower institutional development.*

- *If the family overcomes the foregoing obstacles, it can be facing architectural barriers; that is, the educational institution chosen is not physically accessible because its architectural design prevents it from happening. Also, there can be information and communication barriers because the institution lacks pedagogical, information and communication materials that are adequate for the requirements of their sons and daughters. In addition, there can be administrative and procedural barriers as a result of rigid administrative and academic processes that prevent their sons and daughters from having a personalized plan for their academic development acknowledging their diversity, or with tests adapted to their requirements, or by requesting medical certificates on their physical or intellectual condition and similar situations, or with demands that have not been formally authorized, such as having someone with them at all times (for example, a relative or similar persons).*

- *If the barriers to enter into the regular educational system are still strong and the access to real inclusive education is not guaranteed by enrolling in regular schools, permanence in the system is still full of barriers and difficulties that influence the very high drop-out rates of students with disabilities, particularly when primary education has been completed while being more intense during the final years of secondary education. The following are the main reasons for dropping out the latter:*

  - **The difficulty adolescents with disabilities experience in terms of participating in the extra- curricular life of their peers that rises from family overprotection, stereotypes, social prejudices. In addition, the concept of levelling makes many teachers provide make-up lessons during extra-school time and contribute to the lack of opportunities for participation with peers in these settings through playful, recreational, and sports activities.**

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- Many educational centers refuse to have adolescents and youngsters with disabilities take high school final exams because they are afraid that their low performance may influence an unfavorable evaluation of the educational center.

- Families, representatives of education centers, and agents of assessment processes are reluctant to request and grant the required adjustments so boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities may take those tests.

- The lack of an educational option at tertiary or advanced professional education centers that allows young persons or their families to project their future as part of the workforce.

- The refusal of some academic centers to issue high school diplomas to young persons with disabilities that have completed this cycle by substituting it with a study certification without any value for entering into the following cycle.

The family: a barrier to solve

- *The overprotective attitude of many families that, because of the fear of bullying in regular schools, do not want to send their sons and daughters, or withdraw them to prevent them from suffering these behaviors.*

- *The attachment to diagnoses from health professionals in relation to the ability of their sons and daughters in order to live within the regular community milieu, the lack of expectations for a future with a higher level of independence and self-determination for their sons and daughters, and the lack of feeling to be part of a larger movement which prevents them from mobilizing or creating associations or other organizations (participation or representation-oriented) except in relation to specific issues affecting them. Once their issue is overcome, they stop participating and do not make any contribution to the collective development of the sector.*

- *The need to continue offering segregated education. The representatives of persons with certain disabilities consider that, in their case, a particular education should be offered, such as by associations of people who are deaf and, to a lesser degree, by associations of people who are blind.*

All these barriers, from different sources and with different characteristics, combine to prevent or make it difficult for Colombian boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities to exercise their right to inclusive education under the terms of article 24 of the CRPD, and as reiterated in GC4, issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; in other words, that the right to education must be acknowledged not only by the States but that they must adopt measures aimed at its

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exercise within an inclusive environment considering diversity and the different needs of all the boys, girls, and adolescents regardless of their personal characteristics.

Situation and Barriers against Inclusive Education in the Paraguayan Education System.

The comments and remarks provided by the Saraki Foundation are the result of research work, observations, and many documents obtained from the "Observatorio de Educación Inclusiva,"an entity created within the framework of the Programa Educación y Deportes Inclusivos project of USAID, SARAKI, and the Ministry of Education;developed by civil society and international organizations that participated in the preparation of the "Plan de Acción Nacional por los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad 2015-2030" (National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) as well as the preparation of the Manual de lineamientos para la implementación de la educación inclusiva52(Handbook of orientations for the implementation of inclusive education) ; the document prepared for Inclusion International within the framework of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report where barriers to inclusive education are described, and particularly, in the report of the Relatora Especial sobre los Derechos de las personas con discapacidad - Misión a Paraguay 2016, which identifies the persistence of many barriers that block and limit the right to inclusive education of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities as provided in article 24 of the CRPD and later developed in GC4.

Paraguay ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its corresponding Optional Protocol in June 2008; since then, it has been adjusting its internal legislation to comply with the commitments made as a result of this signature and ratification, as follows:

- *In concordance with article 24 of the CRPD on the right to education within inclusive settings and in equal conditions without discrimination, Law No. 5136/13 (Inclusive Education) was enacted on December 2013 along with its corresponding Regulatory Decree 2.837/2014 and its Resolución de Sanciones No. 1/15.*

- *It approved in 2006 the "Plan de Acción Nacional por los Derechos de las Personas Con Discapacidad 2015-2030,"53 prepared between the State and Civil Society with the support of USAID and of the Paraguayan office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Core idea 11 of this Action Plan is devoted to Education; it establishes in guideline 11.1 the creation of a Schedule for implementing the inclusive education law with the participation of the civil society organizations of and for persons with disabilities so that this law is implemented in a progressive manner.*

Nonetheless, in spite of having this modern legal framework for implementing Inclusive Education,

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of having started the transformation of the administrative structure of the education services, and of having the unquestionable support from the joint efforts of civil society and key government stakeholders, there is a lack of conceptual clarity on the part of the key actors about the transformation required and how to implement the essential changes in the education system to make it respond, in all its parameters, to the patterns defined for inclusive school. This situation has given rise to the fact that, currently, the reality of the education system and the levels of implementation demonstrate a wide divergence between the theoretical and regulatory statements and the day to day practice.

As a result, the persistence of erroneous practices that are not aligned with what is set forth in the legal framework can be detected and observed both in public and private school centers, along with numerous information, knowledge, and comprehension gaps concerning the essential concepts related to the nature and functioning of inclusive education systems and concerning attention and respect for diversity among students, as well as the fulfillment and guarantee of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The foregoing situation shows that, without a doubt, the existence of a progressive regulation, which is conceptually correct, is not enough for guaranteeing the right to inclusive education; it is necessary to complement it with procedures aimed at a conceptual clarification, the allocation of resources and, particularly, the intensification of joint work of the civil society committed to guaranteeing and complying with the rights of boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities in general, and of minors with disabilities, in particular on the part of official sectors, to achieve the comprehensive transformation of the educational system so it responds as a whole to the parameters that define and are part of educational inclusion and, primarily, those related to universality, quality, acknowledgment of diversity, and lack of discrimination as included in the law but not practiced.

Situation of the persons with disabilities in the Paraguayan Education System

- *According to the 2012 National Census, there were 43,248 boys, girls, and adolescents with disabilities, aged between 5 and 17 years. In 2013, the SIRIED reported that the total number of students with disabilities enrolled was 5,871 (2012 figures): this meant that only 12% of those with disabilities were enrolled throughout 2012.*

- *The SIRIED stated that the number of students with disabilities is 4 per each 1,000 students enrolled in the system. Paraguay had the lowest number of students with disabilities in relation to other countries of the region that went through the same evaluation.*

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● *The number of boys, girls, and adolescents with visual, hearing, psychosocial, intellectual, physical disabilities, other disabilities, or non-specified disabilities, was requested from the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC) for years 2014 (2,014 students enrolled), 2015 (4,237 students with disabilities enrolled), and 2016 (1,216 persons with disabilities enrolled). Data from 2014 and 2016 were not included in the analysis because they were deemed inconsistent.*

The data for2015 reflects that only 0.33% of the boys and girls enrolled in the education system reported a type of disability; this implies that, since2015, the number of boys and girls with disabilities enrolled has decreased, resulting in 3 per1,000 students enrolled.

Boys and girls with disabilities enrolled attend Special Schools, in Special Grades, or Regular Schools. Pursuant to Law 5136/13 for Inclusive Education and the CRPD, the regular school is the only possible place where the inclusive education model can be implemented. In 2013, the SIRIED stated that only 10% of the students with disabilities enrolled in the education system were enrolled at regular educational centers. In relation to the 2015 data, the percentage of students enrolled at regular schools reached 21%. Even though there has been significant progress, the high percentage of students with disabilities in segregated educational spaces is worrisome.

● *The General Directorate for Inclusive Education keeps a record of students with disabilities that went from special schools to regular schools (approximately 300) but the total number of students with disabilities at the country level is unknown due to the lack of administrative data of the schools. According to Ministry data, it is estimated that only 36% of people with disabilities, between 6 and 18 years of age, attend a school setting as opposed to 82% of persons without disabilities. (Report by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, UN, 2016 - Informe de la Relatora Especial sobre los derechos de las personas con discapacidad sobre su visita al Paraguay, NNUU, 2016)*

Identified barriers[54]

● *Prevailing confusion in the education system in relation to the concept of Inclusive Education and the requirements that must be present at a school to be considered Inclusive, by mixing up Inclusive Education with other modalities of education, thus allowing the coexistence of segregated educational provision. Parents have the right to decide if their sons and daughters go to an inclusive or to a special school based on criteria derived from misinformation and fear of change.*

- *Lack of appropriation or empathy of different members of the education community in relation to the content and implementation of the Inclusive Education Law, not knowing its value as a transformation instrument to guarantee the exercise of the Right to Education of all boys, girls and adolescents with or without disabilities in inclusive settings that respect differences while not allowing discrimination.*

- *Lack of opportunities for participating and agreeing on the preparation of the legal project for its subsequent dissemination which made and makes it difficult for the education community to clarify its objective, to be aware of the implications entailed by the implementation of inclusive education, and to make the necessary changes to allow the transition from previous education systems and processes to new options and realities offered by Inclusive Education to all minors and, in particular, to those that require their diversity acknowledged and valued as part of the educational process.*

- *Lack of reliable and true information on the total number of students with disabilities in the country and about how many of them are out of the education system or in segregated settings. This lack of information hinders, greatly, and in different manners, the access of minors with disabilities to the education system in general, and to inclusive education in particular. This prevents the State from having the necessary supports, adaptations, materials, and technology needed for creating all the required slots so that the whole country benefits from an inclusive education system.*

- *Persistence of different acceptable and available educational modalities as an option within the Paraguayan education system. This exists because, according to the provisions of the Inclusive Education Law -in full concordance with the CRPD and GC4- the regular school is the only possible space where Inclusive Education can be implemented. However, in Paraguay, students with disabilities that enter into the education system may go through their education process at special schools, in special grades, or in regular schools. This implies that despite what is set forth in Law 5163/13, and according to 2015 data, only 21% have access to regular schools while 79% remain in segregated school settings; this implies also that the students that leave the segregated system and go to inclusive education settings have the choice to return to the previous segregated spaces; there are still families that choose special education as a preferential option for their sons and daughters.*

- *A plan and a budget are needed for dissemination and implementation through training programs at the national level. There is good appropriation on the part of the sectors that are responsible for the education system concerning the Guidelines for an inclusive education service proposed through joint work with civil society. There are plans on how to use them as a*

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guiding element in the training of different education sectors vis-à-vis prejudices and rejection attitudes that block to a great extent not only the access but also the permanence and the learning of the students with disabilities in the inclusive education system to facilitate understanding its components, requirements, and principles, as well as the adoption of the right strategies for their acceptance and implementation with as little resistance as possible.

- *Attitudes and prejudices of the directors and teachers of the school centers who oppose the implementation of the inclusive education system. There are different reasons ranging from prejudice and stereotypes, going through doubts about their own competence and ability to face the eventual work overload, up to the lack of preparation, the lack of all types of supports, pedagogical tools and teaching skills, that allow them to face the inherent demands stemming from the student diversity in a successful manner. The obstacle is reinforced in the implementation of education policy as well as in the design of class materials in Paraguay by their generalized rigidity and static condition. The MEC's policy establishes the principles of diversity and inclusion, and it sets forth the possibility of adaptations of the curriculum according to the institutional and classroom conditions, however, in reality, curriculum adjustments are a measure applied more as an administrative formality not focused on the needs of the student and not translated into significant changes in the methodologies and evaluation, leading to inevitable learning failures, frustration and dropping out of school settings.*

- *The demand imposed by the education centers on parents in terms of having private support teachers that are not part of the classroom education plan but that respond to a profile of personal assistants, or shadows, in order to be able to have access to or stay in the inclusive education system. These persons are paid by the families with their own resources and focus on taking care of all types of needs evidenced by the minor: from going to the bathroom to providing academic aid for doing homework, or spending recreation and leisure time with the boys, girls, and adolescents through games or individualized actions leading to segregation while distancing the student with a disability from peer interaction. This requirement, imposed at the regular school, entails a heavy economic burden for families which is not present at the special education centers that have their own support staff. It is an additional reason for parents to prefer keeping their children in segregated settings which, in addition, offer therapeutic service and care which complements classroom work, often without additional costs.*

- *Lack of interpreters for deaf persons at educational centers and ignorance about Paraguayan sign language. Students build their own communication codes with their families and their habitual social milieu which makes it difficult for them to participate effectively and to learn in the school setting even with the aid of interpreters. The deaf community identifies four*

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criteria that must exist for the quality education of deaf persons: 1. the right to have access to sign language since birth and develop this language as their native language. 2. The importance of having deaf or near-native teachers. 3. The right to grow and share time with their deaf peers in order to guarantee their integral development. 4. The right to have access to bilingual education plans in which sign language is respected as the native language. The biggest barriers are: the ignorance of the value of accessing language signs since early life, the lack of deaf teachers that handle sign language besides the few interpreters of Paraguayan sign language.

● *Insufficient resources for the General Directorate of Inclusive Education. This does not allow progressing towards strengthening the technical abilities of the teaching staff for an inclusive-oriented approach in the classroom as well as for providing the technological and other support that may be required to advance towards quality inclusive education, lower the resistance of teachers, and facilitate the essential paradigmatic changes in relation to disabilities.*

● *Misinformation or lack of awareness of families concerning Education as a right that must be guaranteed to all school-aged minors with disabilities. There is still much misinformation even though, in Paraguay, civil society organizations in the area of disabilities, including those formed by families of persons with disabilities, have had an active role as promoters of the transformation of the educational system from segregation towards the adoption of inclusive education. Even when the fathers and mothers are aware of the enforceable nature of the right to education, they do not have clear and sufficient information about how to exercise it and the paths to follow in order to enroll their sons and daughters at a regular inclusive education institution where they can study with their other siblings, neighbors, and friends and where they have the necessary support types for their entry, permanence, and progress.*

● *The persistence of erroneous stereotypes in relation to persons with disabilities leads families to have low expectations in relation to the school performance of their family members who have a disability, to fear the treatment they may receive at inclusive schools on the part of classmates and teachers, to choose those segregated centers where educational processes are offered with complementary therapeutic or healthcare services and to continue to oppose their disappearance and the completion of the transformation of the education system.*

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Chapter 2. A look at inclusive education from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families (Methodology of the Study)

There is extensive documentation about Latin American countries highlighting the multiple barriers that exist to fulfil the right to inclusive education for all boys, girls and adolescents in Latin America – including those with disabilities. However, nobody has focused up to now on getting to know and understand the underlying problem and lived experiences facing exclusion in the educational system and particularly exclusion within the regular education from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities.

It is in the day-to-day work in classrooms that teachers need support to be able to respond to student diversity, where the strategy success is measured through all students' success, where expressions of solidarity, respect, equity and social justice allow the building of inclusive communities and stronger communities.

UNICEF LACRO and II proposed and developed the present qualitative study in Paraguay, Peru and Colombia to understand from the personal perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and members of their families, the situations they have to face at school level, and analyze the findings in these three countries, within the framework of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and more specifically, those of the GC4 with reference to Article 24 of the CRPD- The Right To Inclusive Education.

The study was carried out by II, through the initiative Catalyst for Inclusive Education and three of its member organizations -Fundación Saraki, Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down and ASDOWN Colombia-, one initiative in each of the three countries approached.

Considering the GC4 that reasserts "States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others", the study endeavors to show the situation in each of the three countries under analysis, extrapolating, as far as possible, to the rest of Latin America.

According to boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families, the reported barriers to inclusion in school practices (Analysis of Barriers Section from Focus Group Discussions- FGD) as a result of the research carried out in the three countries were gathered in various ways, grouped and analyzed in a report that identified "core features of inclusive education"

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as commented by participants in the focus groups, coinciding with the proposals within the 2030 Education framework: Access, participation, process and learning results.

Data collected by participant organizations of the three countries, complemented with the available regional data, can be comparatively analyzed considering possible similarities, differences and patterns of exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion among the three countries.

II is the international network of people with intellectual disabilities and their families advocating for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities worldwide, and as such, UNICEF LACRO admitted it to be a possible limitation to the study. To mitigate this risk, each of the three member organizations of II was assured to be associated with other organizations working with other disabilities in the development of the study.

Additionally, the goal of consulting boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities within a homogenous partner sample allowed the team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education to create a strategy of consultation with entities and groups having experience with this type of participants, to build a country profile survey and a concept note on inclusive education as well as to create a series of webinars designed for the partners of the initiative.

The creation of coalitions between organizations in each country while the study was underway was useful for many purposes: to close potential information gaps by ensuring the data gathering from various sources; to favour cross-fertilization and complementarity between data groups; and to help expand an advocacy network upon completion of the study.

The resulting study, additional to the results of the consultation on the identification of barriers perceived by boys, girls and adolescents and their families provides: 1) specific suggestions for each one of the three countries in relation to the situation observed and recommended actions from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families; and 2) a set of observations and general recommendations that could be considered in the wide Latin American context.

The initiative "Our Opinion Matters: Perspective of Boys, Girls and Adolescents on Discrimination and Barriers to Inclusive Education" offered II the opportunity to use the structure and goals of its initiative Catalyst for Inclusive Education and put the goals of its strategic plan into practice: Advocacy, Network Building and Support to its Members. All of this is reflected through the methodology that was implemented.

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The proposed work structure sought to go beyond answering consultations. Based on a seldom considered point of view as it is the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities, a participative methodology was developed to generate new insights in the region on a matter that as we have mentioned is over-diagnosed from various scenarios, however its implementation in practice faces significant challenges.

Methodology goals in the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families on the barriers that boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities find in regular education settings:

1. *Identify and analyze obstacles to inclusive education of students with disabilities from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families.*
2. *Design a consultation strategy with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities to identify obstacles to inclusive education.*
3. *Work with member organizations of II in the three countries and additionally with other organizations allied for this initiative.*
4. *Build an exchange of knowledge and synergies among participant organizations.*
5. *Strengthen the capacity of teams of Catalyst for Inclusive Education, Asdown, Fundación Saraki and the Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down.*
6. *Create a report between UNICEF LACRO and II with findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study to be used in other countries of the region, at regional level and in international consultations on barriers to inclusive education.*

The methodology for the initiative had 9 Stages (Chart 9) as detailed below:

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Chart 9. Stages in the Methodology of the Initiative

STAGE I Partners and development of Partnerships

- **Identify partners**
- **Establishing partnerships**

STAGE II Strengthening of Partner

- **Provide tools to buil the consultation startegies to consult with children and adolescents with and witout disability**
- **Webinars**
- **Bibliografy on the issue**
- **Defining criterias for the consultation and the c haracteristics of the FGD**
- **Define the structure of the reports**
- **Direct communication with partners to structure the requirements of participants (individuals y groups)**

STAGE III Design of the Consultation Framework

- **Informative Note on Education**
- **Survey on Education Country Profile**
- **Methodology to be used in the Initiative**

STAGE IV Protocol Design and Consultation Strategies

- **Structure of the FGD by each of the partners**
- **Exchange of experiencies of each partner**

STAGE V Implementation of Consultations through Focus Groups

- **Methodological Guides for the FGD**
- **Implement 22 Focus groups**
- **Reports of each FGD Identifying barriers**

STAGE VI Delivery of FGD Results by Partners and Testimonies

- **Country General report**
- **FGD experience**
- **Partners share their experiences**
- **Clasification of the obstacles from Accesibility, Participation, Permanence, Progress/Learning and Welfare**
- **Personal testimonies**

STAGE VII Processing and Analysis of the Information Identification of Obstacles from the Perspective of the Actors

- **Findings analysis and organization of the information collected over the course of the consultation**

STAGE VIII Process Evaluation

- **Recomendations**
- **Conclusions**
- **Forward looking projections**

STAGE IX Preparation of the Final Report

THE FUTURE

STAGE I Partners and development of Partnerships

Asdown Colombia, Fundación Saraki from Paraguay and Sociedad Peruana de Síndrome de Down from Peru were invited to participate in the consultation considering they have the organizational capacity, are working on the matter of inclusive education and have allies at national level which allow them to meet the commitments undertaken by II with UNICEF LACRO within the terms of the consultation: to ensure equity in the participation of boys, girls and adolescents with various types of disabilities (physical, sensory, emotional, multi-disabilities and intellectual disabilities) and their families. For that reason, each participant organization invited its allies and sought new partnerships to develop local consultations to reflect such diversity.

The three partners worked with entities with which they had already been collaborating and had built bonds of confidence and trust, and promoted new partnerships with various organizations, special and regular schools whose features allowed identifying boys, girls and adolescents within the target group of the study, which decreased potential information gaps by ensuring the data were obtained from different sources.

A second challenge in this work was the fact that it was the first time to carry out within a research of primary and participative source the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities, for which the development of a strategy was fundamental for the framing of consultation protocols in Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with these actors.

STAGE II Strengthening of Partners

The Methodology process recognizes the experience of partner organizations regarding their institutional work and dynamics, with the premise of giving control of the transformation processes to their people to build a sense of belonging and ensure sustainability in the long term. It involved significant feedback and learning for the organizations and the II team.

After the identification and revision of consultations with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities, all partners received bibliography that they revised and shared internally. At the beginning of the process, two experiences were identified in the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents:

1. *National consultation with boys, girls and adolescents "What about childhood?" (¿Y La Niñez Qué?) UNICEF COLOMBIA 2018. Summary of results of consultation with 17,864 boys, girls and adolescents between 4 and 17 years old.[1,2]*

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2. *Child participation: Consultation with boys, girls and adolescents from the District Secretariat of Social Integration of Bogota.3*

In addition to these two experiences, webinars were held as a strategy to give tools to partners to:

- *Design the consultation structure as a result of talks with boys, girls and adolescents to collect information that allowed identifying their perceptions and conceptions on the barriers to participation, permanence, promotion and learning of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities within the framework of regular education.*

- *Share between partner organizations the structure and consultation strategies generated.*

- *Submit the consultation results at the end of the initiative.*

Criteria for Consultations

To consult with boys, girls and adolescents, the following was agreed with the participants to be considered within the structure and implementation of Focus Group Discussions:

1. *Participants: Boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities*
2. *Boys, girls and adolescents who participated must be between 8 and 18 years old*
3. *Representation of the various disabilities*
4. *Recognition of the ethical aspect of consultations with children*
5. *Ensure consent of parents and schools*
6. *Consultations should be at least on STEP 5 of the Children Participation Ladder. They provide information and can consult (Chart 10). On this step there are cases where background information is provided on the issue to be consulted, opinions as a result of consultations are collected and suggestions are taken into account.*
7. *Consultations were planned as a strategy of communication with various ways and levels of communication intended for boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and adults with differentiated patterns. In particular, in the first ones certain aspects such as body and graphic expressions were considered, and others that allowed building relationships with them without underestimating their child condition or minimizing their opinions.*

Chart 10. Children Participation Ladder

STEP 8. – Child-initiated project whose decisions are shared with adults
The participation of boys, girls does not mean they have to do things "on their own" as it occurs in the previous step. The best cases are those in which young boys, girls devise, direct and manage the initiative. However, they prefer to collaborate with adults as they think that in participation it is necessary to have all possible opinions. For instance, boys, girls launch a local radio station and ask adults to manage the radio space and budget, also supervised by boys, girls.

STEP 7. – Child-led project
Boys and girls take ownership: they make decisions. Adults participate only if their support is required. For instance, a group of adolescents in the neighborhood request a place to hold meetings and skate in a park that the city council is remodeling

STEP 6. – Adult-initiated project, but decisions are also made by boys and girls
Boys, girls and adults make decisions on an equal footing with the necessary information. For instance, a scout group plans some course activities and then tasks are distributed to everybody: young boys and girls and monitors.

STEP 5. – Consulted and informed
It happens when you have been informed and even consulted. Besides, your proposals have been taken into account! For instance, the institute has distributed surveys to decorate classrooms and some ideas given by boys and girls are put into practice. (However, such ideas are still being selected by adults).

STEP 4. – Informed
It occurs when boys and girls receive information and understand the project but are not further involved because messages and decisions come from adults. For instance, a board of boys, girls decide on the schedule of activities and distributes information to boys and girls for their attendance. However, they were not able to give their opinion or propose other activities.

STEP 3. – The "show" child
Here we classify cases in which some child is used as a "show" for his/her skills, while other children do not have the opportunity to participate. For instance, public debates or conferences where boys and girls with better speaking skills or bright ideas are selected but the rest do not have the opportunity to express their ideas

STEP 2. – Decoration
It happens when as adults we use boys and girls to spread a cause without giving them any explanation. Boys, girls are just decoration. They look good! For instance, pictures of demonstrations or protest acts where boys and girls appear with banners and T-shirts without understanding the messages they are carrying.

STEP 1.- Manipulation or deceit
It occurs when as adults we use boys and girls to transmit our own ideas instead of listening to them. This is a way of deceiving boys and girls… and of deceiving ourselves! For instance, a child reads a speech at a public event, but the text has been prepared by adults.

Source: HART. R. A. (1993).

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STAGE III Design of the Consultation Framework

In addition to the strategy for the structuring of the Focus Group Discussions, three tools were built by Catalyst for Inclusive Education in collaboration with partners of the countries:

1. *Informative Note on Education: It introduced the conceptualization of Inclusive Education that framed the consultation and concerning the initiative it invited the three organizations to generate a document with information on inclusive education in their countries based on the policies, legislation, practices and obstacles identified.*

2. *Survey on Education Country Profile: Check list to collect information of the countries in relation to the education of school-age boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities. The survey for parents/teachers was used and adapted, originally used by II to prepare the Global Report on Inclusive Education, "When We Are Included, Too"4 modified for this study, including questions about life experiences and practices based on the implications of the GC4 for Inclusive Education; matters identified as obstacles to Inclusive Education and barriers identified by other regional organizations as a result of the work they are carrying out in this area.*

   As an x-ray of the educational system, it allows to identify distinctly some of the obstacles at macro and meso level for an inclusive educational system.

3. *Methodology to be used in the Initiative: For each country (Colombia, Peru and Paraguay) each partner built its reference framework to introduce indicators, barriers and advances to Inclusive Education. In addition, partners defined the structure of partnerships, processes and procedures of the FGC.*

   The initiative indicated each of the three organizations to submit its information with data obtained through various sources of information: a) Official Data, b) Information obtained through the work underway on this matter in each of the countries. The information as well as the source is given in the chapter related to Reference Framework, Backgrounds and Contexts in the Region.

STAGE IV Protocol Design and Consultation Strategies.

Through a qualitative research method, each partner identified potential participant groups and designed from each organization the structure for consultation protocols.

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Each partner identified criteria which were subsequently used to select the participant groups to work with, following the parameters provided by the regional team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education.

The structure of the FGD was developed through a participative and constructivist process with the information shared and exchanged between partners through webinars. Allies to the initiative shared their experiences of consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities. In this process, the organizations, UNICEF and II, shared their lessons learned, reflections, recommendations, suggestions, and logistic aspects, among others.

The FGD used a protocol validated by partners with material developed for the initiative, including presentations, videos and sketches to obtain reactions and answers from participants with suggestions in order that the facilitator could adjust them to each group that were included in the methodology and attached reports of each country. These are available to be consulted online.

In all the activities undertaken by the Focus Groups, explanations related to families were given to obtain the "Informed Consent", as the legal authorization of parents or guardians for boys, girls and adolescents to voluntarily participate in the Focus Groups, having understood the goals of the research.

Concerning boys, girls and adolescents, the Focus Groups took place in public and private schools. As for family matters, they were developed in the headquarters of participant and/or allied organizations.

STAGE V Implementation of Consultations through Focus Groups

The Focus Groups consisted of an average of 10 participants, having as the main purpose the identification of these actors' perceptions on the obstacles that boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities and their families face to access, stay and learn in a regular school that promotes inclusion.

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BOYS, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS			
City	**Educational Institution**	**Participants**	**Age**
Bogota	Liceo Val	16	6-20
Bogota	Nuevo Gimnasio	12	8-17
Bucaramanga	Escuela Precoz Glen Doman	20	7-18
Cali	Colegios Públicos y Privados	5	5-10
FAMILIES			
BOYS. GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS			
City	**Educational Institution**	**Participants**	**Age**
Cali	Familias Down de Cali Confandi	6	
Bucaramanga	Fundación Humanos Down	12	
Bucaramanga	Corporación Down sin Fronteras		
Bogota	INSOR Colegio Filadelfia para Sordos	11	
Bogota	Asdown		
Santa Marta	Fundación Caribe	7	

PERU				
BOYS. GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS				
City /District	**Educational Institution**	**Participants**	**Age**	**Allied Organization**
Villa Maria del Triunfo	IE 6155 José Bernardo Alce-do	10	7 a 12 años	Aynimundo
Manchay	IE Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre	7	Adolescents with and with-out disabilities from 13 to 18 years old	Warmakuna Hope
Callao	I.E.P. Santo Domingo	6	Boys and girls with and with-out disabilities from 4 to 6 years old	
FAMILIES				

City /District	Educational Institution	Participants	Age	Allied Organization
Callao	I.E.P. Santo Domingo	4	Parents of boys and girls with and without disabilities from 4 to 6 years old	Kusqa
Manchay	IE Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre	6	Parents of boys and girls with and without disabilities from 13 to 18 years old	
Villa Maria del Triunfo	IE 6155 José Bernardo Alcedo	6	Parents of boys and girls with and without disabilities from 7 to 12 years old	Aynimundo

PARAGUAY				
BOYS, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS				
City	**Institution**	**Sector**	**Participants**	
Asuncion	Ed. Básica Ma. Felicidad González	Official	16	
Asuncion	Centro Educativo Los Laureles	Private	10	
Asuncion	CAI Máximo Arellano	Official	9	
Asuncion	Centro para la Discapacidad Auditiva Rosa Peña	Official	11	With sign language interpreter
Lambare	Ed. Básica Leandro P. Prieto	Official	15	In Guarani
FAMILIES				
Asuncion			11	

The methodological guidelines were addressed to boys, girls and adolescents, and parents. Even though each partner developed its own guidelines, it can be noticed that activities with similar approaches were performed in all of them.

Table 6. Methodological Guidelines – Detail of Activities by type of FGD

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES – BOYS, GIRLS AND ADOLESCENTS FGD	METHODOLOGICAL GUIDELINES – PARENTS FGD
Welcome and Introduction	
Facilitators and participants' introduction. Why are we here? Research goal and specific activity in a way that they are able to freely make the decision to participate voluntarily and consent that their identities, opinions and images may be made public.	Facilitators and participants' introduction and research goals. During the Focus Group, participants were reassured that there were no good or bad answers and that, on the contrary, it was important to know their experiences without giving a value judgment.
Ice Breaking Activity	
Dynamics adapted to group ages	Dynamics in which each participant told part of a made-up story which parts had to be linked.
Perception of disabilities	
Analysis of images of people with disabilities and reflection on the following questions: • What do they know and understand about disabilities? • Do they know people with disabilities? • What is their knowledge and perception regarding persons with disabilities?	Analysis of images of people with disabilities and reflection on the following questions: Who are they? Do all the people in the images have anything in common? Have they heard about disabilities? Do they know people with disabilities? Where are people with disabilities? How do they think society treats people with disabilities?
Understanding Inclusion	
Analysis of a tale and reflection on the following questions: Did any of you feel identified with the character? Do you think that all of us must go to school? What should happen so that everyone can go to school?	Analysis of a video and reflection on questions such as: Did any of you feel identified with the parents in the video? Do you think school is accessible to students? Do you think all of us must go to school? What should happen so that everyone can go to school? What do you think are the main barriers or obstacles to inclusive education?
Core Questions	**Educational Paths**
Debate on questions such as: Why do you think that some people do not go to school? Why do you like to go to school? What i s the most important thing that you have learned? How do you participate in school activities? Has something very difficult ever happened at school? What did it happen and how was it solved? How do you treat each other as classmates? How are teachers?	Presentation of participants on achievements and difficulties faced by their children with or without disabilities during their educational path, as well as expectations and goals for the future expected to be achieved by their children.

Representation of my school	
Through a drawing, they show what makes it possible for all to attend or not school. The little ones were asked to draw what they liked most and what they liked less at school.	

Facilitators adjusted activities, questions and the way of collecting data according to the skills of the participants in each group. The strategies considered in the guidelines for students were adapted to the needs of each group, encouraging the use of images, pictograms or drawings, sign language and translations in the case of boys, girls and adolescents that spoke Guarani, to ensure the participation of all present.

In this way, barriers were identified from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families who are inputs for the further analysis that gives two sets of results: 1) specific suggestions with regard to the observed situation and recommended actions from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families, for each of the three countries; 2) a set of general comments and recommendations that may be considered in the broader Latin American context.

STAGE VI Delivery of FGD Results by Partners and Testimonies

In recent years, national partners have been working on inclusive education and used their knowledge and experience through previous works to document obstacles for boys, girls and adolescents to receive an inclusive education of quality and equity in their countries.

The reports submitted for the initiative included this information in addition to the information gathered by the FGD of boys, girls and adolescents and their families and some life testimonies and within the initiative. All of them are presented in this document.

In the presentation of the Report, obstacles identified by actors were organized as barriers:

- To Accessibility,
- To Participation,
- To Permanence,
- To Progress/ Learning; and
- To Welfare

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In each country, during the **FGD** cases were identified in which personal stories reflected obstacles for the protagonists to receive an inclusive education or testimonies from the initiative itself within the organizations. These stories are highlighted in the report and help to detect barriers to those who are directly affected.

STAGE VII Processing and Analysis of the Information - Identification of Obstacles from the Perspective of the Actors

The team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education organized the information which, as previously explained, was obtained through triggering questions, the development of the process of analysis and reflections through tales, pictures and facilitation dynamics.

The reported barriers from the voices of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families for inclusion in school practices (Analysis of Barriers Section from Focus Group Discussions) as a result of the research carried out in the three countries include:

1. Analysis of identified obstacles arising from consultations made based on the information obtained from the new consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities, respecting and indicating all the data obtained, without any omissions.
2. Findings. Obstacles found are analyzed by the FGD and occasionally, aspects revealing obstacles beyond the scope of the research but involving a close connection with this topic are identified, and they are aligned with the opinion of participants to the consultation, the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents and their families regarding the educational system.

STAGE VIII Process Evaluation

Recommendations and Conclusions

Obstacles identified by the actors consulted, the way they have faced them in everyday life and the pertinent analysis are inputs that allow suggesting specific measures, arrangements and actions to overcome them.

The initiative and partners' strength as well as lessons learned are presented during the initiative to identify new findings and offer recommendations to support the transformations of educational systems in all three countries and the region towards inclusive education. The analysis and recommendations have been prepared having as a reference, the research goal, the findings

discovered and their corresponding analysis. It is worth mentioning the importance of having taken into account the participant actors' **VOICES** throughout the research process .

Aspects linked to knowledge, relationships with and between organizations and their dynamics were identified, as well as the development of new challenges and technical implications, relationships in relation to the participation of actors in the development of Focus Groups, and those linked to the research involving populations seldom taken into account before such as children with and without disabilities.

Forward-looking projections

The analysis of the obstacles identified by children and adolescents and their families and all the information arising from the research, in addition to the experience of II and Catalyst for Inclusive Education put on display the importance of identifying proposals for potential work strategies to give continuity to the strengthening of Inclusive Education at short and medium term. These are required so that changes in the educational system can have a real impact on the education of children and adolescents with and without disabilities and on quality education.

STAGE IX Preparation of the Final Report

The document of the Final Report was prepared by using various methods of research;

- *Revision and analysis of the Profile Document and the country report*

- *Analysis of the information provided by Focus Groups with boys, girls and adolescents and their families*

- *Analysis of testimonies*

All this allowed for an exploratory analysis of the description given by participant partners regarding the current state of Inclusive Education as an overview of each of the countries included in the research with an emphasis on the obstacles for Inclusive Education identified by children and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families. Having a look at the region and the future on Inclusive Education, the analysis includes findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the study.

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Chapter 3. Barriers to Inclusive Education in Latin America from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families

"States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right". CRPD Art.7

The work performed by Asdown, SPSD and Fundación Saraki was presented as Country Reports and are the inputs used by the team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education in the following analysis.

> *Schools and classrooms are microsystems of the educational system; and that is where the actors of the research experience situations that they share in the Focus Group Discussions.*

In the presentation and analysis of the Information collected in the research process through the Focus Group Discussions, all three partners agreed to group barriers, which in turn are identified with the proposals within the Education 2030 Framework – access, participation, processes and learning results, as follows:

1. Barriers to Accessibility
2. Barriers to Participation
3. Barriers to Permanence
4. Barriers to Progress/Learning
5. Barriers to Welfare

In each category, voices of boys, girls and adolescents and their families were differentiated within the Focus Group Discussions (FGD).

Participants from Various Contexts:

The various contexts and circumstances of participants lead them to have diverse perceptions on disabilities. In Colombia, all boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities within focus groups are part of public or private institutions attended by persons with disabilities, which means that they have had the experience of living with them and know them. For them, physical features, behaviors, difficulties to learn, difficulties with physical skills and those related to learning, and difficulties in communications and relationships indicate that a person has some disability.

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"Daniel has a different way of thinking and different skills, in other words, having some disability does not mean he does not have skills, he has them but in another way". (Private School, Bogota. Age 12-19).

"They have different physical and cognitive features and habits. They may behave in a different way". (Private School, Bogota. Age 12-19).

"Persons with disabilities are people that look the other way, not as normal people. It is difficult for them to interact with others". (Private School, Bogota. Age 8-20).

"They are children in wheelchairs; when they are blind a dog goes by their side or they have a walking stick. They are children with Down syndrome". (Private School, Cali. Valeria, 10-year-old girl).

When questioned, the answer of some adolescents with disabilities is to name themselves as persons with disabilities but with capabilities. At the same time, they consider themselves to be happy people:

"I have capabilities". (14-year-old boy with Down syndrome. Private School, Bogota.)

"People with disabilities are happy". (15-year-old girl with Down syndrome. Private School, Bogota.)

Although some participants without disabilities say that people with disabilities have difficulties, they also recognize their positive aspects and their assimilation of features and situations in a similar way as their own personal experiences:

"As any person, they have some disability but have skills". (Private School, Bogota. Age 8-20).

"They have many qualities; they are tender, intelligent, cheerful. They retain many more things than us who do not have disabilities. They are persons similar to us; they sometimes have more qualities than us". (Private School, Bogota. Age 8-20).

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In Peru and Paraguay, not all the groups of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities had been at regular schools that included students with disabilities in which we could identify whether they promoted inclusion. Some of them with disabilities had attended regular schools and by the time of the consultation were attending special schools. Their experiences are of high value for this type of consultation, albeit the number of participants is not high. Their comments reflect the educational contexts in which they had the opportunity to participate.

> "In my case, when I started my studies, I was 8 years old. I studied for a while in a district school; I did not know I had a disability. I knew it when the headmaster told my mom: she is a fool girl, she will never learn. We looked for another school. Then, I was sent to workshops, but they are useless". (Sandra, mother with cognitive impairment about her own experience)

> "I visited thirty-five schools with my daughter Valeria, door by door, without any solutions. At last, she was accepted in a school for a while; they left her sitting all day and her classmates made fun of her. The headmaster said: if I could teach 35 ignorant people, how can I not teach that girl?... I'll give her the diploma right now". (Sandra, a mother with cognitive impairment, about Valeria's experience, her 14-year-old daughter with cognitive impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

In the Focus Group Discussions in Paraguay, disabilities of boys, girls are described as follows : When looking at a drawing of a girl with a walking stick and glasses, they said: "She is a blind person, these people cannot see", and somebody pointed out that he/she was aware of that through relatives with disabilities. Something similar happened when observing other disabilities where everybody identified what they were about and "which things they were not able to do: talk, hear, walk, or learn as the rest (concerning Down syndrome)".

Accessibility Barriers

The education of people with disabilities must ensure conditions of accessibility, adaptability, flexibility and equity with other students without any type of discrimination[1]. Accessibility describes the degree to which an environment, service or product allows access by as many people as possible, in particular, people with disabilities. In that way, access to school, specifically to regular schools, turns to be a permanent barrier to students with disabilities and their families in all three countries.

Participants to the FGD identify an exclusion from education of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities in a disproportionate way in comparison with other minority groups which are also

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systemically and systematically excluded. They describe barriers to access in relation to the physical environment and movement, transportation; information and communications, including information and communication technologies and health systems. The analysis reveals that most barriers are primarily associated with beliefs and out of date visions about disabilities that cause fear, charity, compassion and feelings of incompetence in the interested parties which unfavorably impact their schooling possibilities; and from the analysis they are identified as "disability discrimination".

Most of the barriers in this category are identified in the family member FGD as they occur from early childhood together with the lack of information and direct denial of admission and school tuition.

> "Since he was 5 years old, I'm looking for a school and he has been rejected everywhere because of his condition, because he was in a wheelchair, because there was no teacher who understood his case; and once they asked me for a shadow teacher". (Mother from Colombia)

However, students without disabilities at primary school corroborate that everyone has the right to go to school but that some cannot attend school for being sick:

> "Some students cannot go to school. Those who are sick in hospital or who had died cannot go". (Peru)

> "I felt rejected by several schools because they had a high level". (Peru)

Information has been grouped according to the following perspectives

    i.   School Exclusion
    ii. Barriers to Admission
    iii. Physical Barriers and Barriers to Movement
    iv. Financial Barriers and Costs of Education (Public vs. Private)
    v. Barriers to Information and Procedures
    vi. Health System and Diagnoses
    vii. Attitudinal Barriers

Exclusion from School

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Families identify the exclusion from education suffered by their children with disabilities from early childhood and more often in further schooling stages but express their gratitude when they get a place in a special education school.

> "I have been wandering around for three years looking for a school. I appreciate that she was accepted in school despite her condition, as she was almost rejected because she was unstable and awkward, she had an impulsive behavior towards her classmates; she did not want to work or do anything, she began to wet her clothes, a total lack of control. I struggled trying to make them understand that there were situations that she was able to overcome and she has already overcome them. The fact is that she was accepted, but I searched a lot".
> (Cecilia, Carolina's mother, 9-year-old girl with cognitive impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Families as well as boys, girls and adolescents say that they do not know about the right to education and its implications, such as the right to receive support and the duty of schools and teachers to consider them as part of inclusive education. Moreover, it is difficult for them to understand the value of inclusion.

Families ask for information to allow them to identify the support that they as families need; they expressed fear for their children's safety and had low expectations on their sons and daughters' ability to learn which is increased by medical diagnoses, teachers' perceptions and negative attitudes by the community towards their sons and daughters. They accept integration practices as an option, for instance; their sons and daughters' attendance to "special" classrooms; being taken out of classrooms to "level" them; and they even allow that their sons and daughters be regarded exclusively from a deficiency angle

> "Adolescents with disabilities out of school pointed out that they would like to attend school to be able to play with classmates. However, they do not show indignation or anger for their lack of opportunities". (Peru)

Exclusion from education, negative and/or adverse situations towards a person are justified by families and even by students as a result of their behaviors or disabilities.

> "Throughout his student life, his barrier has been his lack of fluency in sign language; he has not always had suitable teachers in sign language. On two occasions he was changed to classes with regular teachers who were almost unaware of sign language, it was then when he came to a standstill". (José, Luis's father, 17-year-old young with hearing impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

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"Juan has permanent support. The problem is that I also attended classes because Juan does not have verbal language or a clear focus, or a conventional way to express himself. When there were questions or rounds, I answered, not Juan. I did not know what Juan wanted to answer. I said that this scheme was wrong. Our aim was not so much that Juan learned, rather that he interacted with people of various ages". (Mother of a person with multiple disabilities. Bogota, Colombia).

"There was a particular child who tried to tell some experience, but the interpreter was not able to understand. When the child's teacher was consulted, she said that he uses his own particular signs that are not easy to be understood". (Paraguay)

Barriers to Admission

The unawareness of governmental authorities, principals and teachers on the concept and implications of Inclusive Education, as well as of national policies, make families think that the problem lies in their sons and daughters. Families say there are not enough quotas, admission of their sons and daughters to school depends on laws, regulations, and in many cases on local governmental authorities; and if they manage to enroll their sons and daughters in school, many times it turns out that principals and teachers do not open doors to them.

"After the headmaster was replaced, the new one came in with the mindset of admitting children with disabilities and then they admitted my girl. Many times, admission to schools depends on the will of headmasters". (Carmen, Laura's mother, 16-year-old adolescent with cognitive impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

"We visited a recommended school that was very expensive. My husband said: let's make this effort. When we arrived, the headmaster said: this is a class for 15 children and I already have 16". (Marina, Juan's mother, 7-year-old boy with cognitive and hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

"My daughter Laura was rejected many times because of her cochlear implant. She was admitted in a kindergarten of the department of Social Integration because her granny works there. (Juana, Laura's mother, 15-year-old girl with hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Despite the regulations issued by the Ministries of Education of the three countries which set the obligation of schools to admit students with disabilities, directors reject their school tuition arguing

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that the school is not prepared to face behavior problems and cognitive difficulties related to students with disabilities.

> "When I was looking for regular schools they told me to go to a special one because he could hit other children… they think that a special child is a trouble-maker". (Peru)

> "Carolina's educational process has been hard as I sent her to a regular school , I tried it but because of adverse situations with teachers I took her out. She went to a district school up to May but the teacher and headmaster of the institution were difficult people to work with. They did not look for mechanisms of help for Carolina, mechanisms of change. So I said: We must leave this school".

Most of them in all three countries identify educational authorities' lack of disposition to admit students with disabilities. Only some schools admit boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities; and frequently the distance to their homes makes it difficult for their families. There are no interpreters; and teachers do not speak sign language.

> "I have been looking for a place since she was 9 years old and now she is 12. School principals did not show interest in their admission. It was not so easy, they told me: there is no place for a special person". (Carmen, Laura's mother, 16-year-old adolescent with cognitive impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

> "There was a school where they admitted him but it was not near home". (Mother of a person with cognitive impairment, Bucaramanga, Colombia)

> "We live far away and the closest school limits me. They do not accept her because they do not have trained staff to teach her sign language". (Laura, Rocío's mother, 5-year-old girl with hearing impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

Families often hear the myth that children "need to be ready", which was also mentioned in the IADB's webinars in relation to early childhood's programs as the basis for a further access to schooling.

> "Bring me the child when he walks and talks". (Marina, Juan's mother, 7-year-old boy with cognitive and hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Persons with disabilities enter the educational system with the label of disability. The medical model still prevails in the preconceived opinions of those who are responsible for education.

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"When they enter school, the label of disability is imposed on them, they have a label. Before a child with disability, they ask what he has instead of asking what he likes". (Nicole, Sonia's mother, 16-year-old adolescent with hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

"When I step in, the first thing they ask me is: What type of therapy does he receive? How frequently? They do not know him, they have not tried anything with him but ask for these assessments. I do not know how to introduce Nicolás when I'm looking for a kindergarten for him. Things change when they know he has Down syndrome". (Consuelo, Nicolás' mother, 5-year-boy with cognitive impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Conditions related to Access

Some conditions to access schooling are related to disabilities such as not having sphincter control, having oral language or others, but what is more often required is a guardian or shadow to accompany the student.

In some cases, a relative -the mother in the following case - is the one who carries out this task which has an impact on the family structure and economy.

"I overcame many barriers, visited many kindergartens. Juan has been in school for two years. The first time I visited his school, the headmaster told me: this child cannot be here. Go to another city …, go to Usme. Then I said: I will not go to Usme, to the other end of our city; my child lives just three blocks from here. This is the school he belongs to, I will support him. Then, the teacher said: How long do I have to put up with you? Here, we admit normal children like this one, not like yours. They (teachers) are supposed to have been at school for a long time, to have knowledge, they are teachers who should understand us and promote inclusion. There is no specialized human talent or will". (Marina, Juan's mother, 7-year-old boy with cognitive and hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Physical Barriers and Barriers to Movement

As part of the barriers that schools represent, mainly those from the public sector, participants highlight physical and urban accessibility barriers that impede the use of wheelchairs in the streets and public transportation, preventing adolescents with physical disabilities from moving to school.

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A woman attended a focus group carrying her 12-year-old daughter wrapped in a blanket on her back, explaining the dependence that it causes on her:

> "Now she has grown up, she is 12 years old; she is heavy to be carried and carrying her is hard… It's difficult to get on a car, very difficult, I live on the hill and have to carry her up there … Sometimes cars do not want to take me there". (Peru).

These barriers are more clearly identified by boys, girls and adolescents who participated in various FGD, they identify the lack of ramps, and accessible schools or classrooms. In this regard, they detect that equipment would be enough to access school even though its accessibility would not allow the free transit of people with physical disabilities.

In Paraguay, the question was raised regarding how difficult it would be to grant physical as well as learning access to other boys, girls and adolescents with other disabilities who would like to access school – examples were given. Barriers to physical access were never mentioned in boys' and girls' answers but rather their own disabilities as barriers: "It will be difficult for them because they cannot see the blackboard". When referring to physical disabilities, they said "We'll have to help them climb the stairs".

Boys and girls gave their answers based on their personal experiences with classmates and relatives. Everybody can see people with disabilities' d ifficulties or barriers; and at the same time, they propose solutions related to solidarity and help without proposing changes in their settings.

"Wouldn't your classmate in a wheelchair have a better movement if there were more ramps in the school?" was a question asked to boys and girls . Then, they were invited to observe the access with stairs that led to their classroom Then we asked them again, " Do you think that your classmate can reach the classroom?" The unanimous answer was "Yes, because e verybody helps her, some of us will hold her while others carry the wheelchair".

We insisted on the need for ramps to have easy access to the classroom, but the answer did not change. We referred to visual impairment because a child mentioned that a relative of his had such disability. It was pointed out that these people use walking sticks to move. We got a positive answer when they were asked if a person with visual impairment could attend school to learn.

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In response to the question of whether it would be difficult for them to learn and the ways to overcome it, children indicated that learning would be difficult as they **CANNOT SEE** and could not see what the teach er writes on the blackboard, but immediately others answered that this situation would be solved as they would read it for them. Other children commented that people who cannot see read by using Braille (the expression used was "through some dots that are their letters").

The facilitator introduces the consultation, on whether perhaps it would be easier to ask the teacher to verbally explain rather than using only images or look for other options in order for blind children to be able to learn. The children's answer was that their teacher always teaches by writing on the blackboard and using posters but that such children would be helped by the rest who would explain them.

The concept of "learning" is focused on the use of blackboards, exercise books, exhibitions and posters; therefore, there are no opinions concerning the barriers to learning methodologies or strategies because for them learning means being able to copy from the blackboard and do the exercises the teacher puts on there. T hi s reason causes disabilities to be considered as the main barrier rather than learning settings. Testimonies of Focus Groups in Paraguay.

Financial Barriers and Costs of Education (Public Schools vs. Private Schools)

Families consider that private education is of a higher quality of teaching in comparison with the public system and, those who can, make economic efforts for their sons and daughters to be accepted in these schools where there are mandatory additional payments. Within private education, there are also schools that accept them and sometimes they require supports paid by their families.

At the same time, families say that due to economic problems they can only enroll their sons and daughters in public schools as private schools have high and unaffordable costs.

They mention the shortage of economic resources to access health services which makes access to school difficult. In one of the testimonies, a mother points out that she had to leave her city and move to Lima so that her child could receive medical attention, who was diagnosed one year later with hearing impairment.

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The lack of resources and opportunities in rural areas causes families to move to cities.

> "I visited fifteen private schools for my child to have access to regular education". (Mother of a person with cognitive impairment, Bucaramanga, Colombia).

They mention turning special schools into support centers for inclusion, which sometimes becomes a barrier: "It is hard because the principal of the school of children who are unable to speak argues with the principal of the regular school".

Barriers to Information and Procedures

Families persistently mention their lack of information and support in relation to their sons' and daughters' disabilities. One of the aspects indicated by families in the consultation process concerned finding the relevant information about their sons' and daughters' conditions in order to be able to give them an early intervention that promotes their integral development. Besides, they do not have a clear idea of how to access school, for instance, how to apply for school admission, to request an adjustment or to make claims when there is no response from schools or classrooms to the need of support for students with disabilities.

There is a culture of complacency and thankfulness for what they are offered. Neither families nor boys and girls or adolescents have the culture of claiming or demanding. The lack of information is also expressed in different ways by boys, girls and adolescents.

Families point out the ignorance of the Sign Language by the educational community as a barrier for students with hearing impairment to communicate with others and in that way fully participate in educational processes. For instance, a deaf student's mother indicated that she removed her child from regular school to enroll him in a special school because he was failing to learn:

> "I removed him from school because inclusion does not work. All the students there were hearing students, but he was deaf, everybody made progress except him; he only cut and pasted, and what was he learning? Nothing... I looked for schools for deaf specifically for him because he would learn and receive education there". (Peru).

> "Nowadays, all classrooms are attended by hearing students and there are only two multi-grade classrooms: one for deaf children and the other one for children with intellectual disability, with Down syndrome". (Laura, Rocío's mother, 5-year-old girl with hearing impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia)

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Parents of boys and girls with hearing impairment indicate that neither their sons and daughters nor themselves know sign language and learning it is considered important to have better communication.

> "We need interpreters, people who help them to develop language and us as parents, because we understand in our way, in the way we have learned. We don't know the sign language nor do our children". (Sonia, Juan's mother, 8-year-old boy with intellectual disability and hearing impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

Even in FGD with boys and girls and adolescents attending schools for inclusion they identify discriminatory practices carried out by teachers and they mention they feel powerless to change it.

> "I do not say the support group is bad, the fact is that they (children with disabilities) also want to be in the mainstream classrooms, because Laura has often told me that sometimes she wants to be with me and sometimes with Juan. Support separates them from the rest, they are no fools, they understand threats and it hurts, they do not want to be out of their class, they want to be with the rest". (Private school, Bogota. Age 8-16).

> "People who cannot achieve some things, cannot be separate but they need to be put together and be taught in different ways". (Private school, Bogota. Age 8).

Health System Barriers and Barriers to Diagnoses

No diagnoses or opportunities. The health system is identified as an important barrier to access education. The medical model particularly in the early years of life is the most important benchmark recognized by families to "improve disabilities".

> "As a family, it took us long to know about the right to education. We were very involved in rehabilitation. Daniel was already 8 years old, the problem is that we started schooling late, he missed the kindergarten stage. We had not taken it into account because when started we focused on medical issues; we did not have any information". (Celmira, Daniel's mother, 17-year-old adolescent with multiple disabilities, Bogota, Colombia).

> "Hospital support is at a very early stage regarding the child that due to his health condition needs support at home. His educational process is stopped because of his health condition and kindergartens do not consider this matter… When my child has been ill, and then he

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comes back to the kindergarten, he falls behind. There is no school plan at home." (Mother of a child with cognitive impairment, Bogota)

In another testimony, a father indicates that he did not know her child had Down syndrome until she was four years old.

A deaf student's mother had to move from the province to Lima for her child to be assisted and it took more than one year to be diagnosed with hearing impairment. O nly after the diagnosis was she able to decide on her child's education which would h ave never occurred had the family remained in the province. Testimony Few services in rural areas.)

Most participant families mention that therapies or specialized services for their sons and daughters with disabilities are important factors for their school inclusion. In this sense, the economic resources to pay specialized services, as well as the location of therapy centers become a barrier to the permanence of students at school. They indicate that specialized services such as language and occupational therapies, and physical rehabilitation among others, are expensive and in some cases are at a long distance from their homes. A participant commented that he had to carry out fundraising activities to get the money they needed:

> "I struggled for language therapies asking, knocking on several doors, and she finally underwent surgery. I sold hundreds of chickens to get 1000 Soles" (Peru).

Attitudinal Barriers

The frequency of attitudinal barriers rooted in the society has a deep impact on educational opportunities of persons with disabilities. The staff of institutions persists in negative and excluding social behaviors based on prejudices and stereotypes that limit the offer and access to school life, delaying formation and socialization processes of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities.

Likewise, participants find it a barrier for their families to perceive persons with disabilities. Many participants claim not having received family support; on the contrary, they point out that their relatives have a negative perception, based on low expectations about their sons and daughters with disabilities:

> "It was hard listening to my family saying he is an ill person and I have struggled against it. Sometimes his aunt says, 'he does not understand because he is deaf.' " (Peru).

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The above described, plus the situations of teasing and bullying to which students are exposed, influences the self-concept and self-esteem of people with disabilities. In this sense, mothers of adolescents with disabilities who participate in this process, share that their sons and daughters challenge their physical aspect, their learning process or are ashamed of psychological therapy.

> "My son's nose is deformed and asks me 'Why am I like this? Why do the other children keep looking at me? I wish to die right now." (Peru).

> "She can´t write well. She says to me, 'Mom, why I cannot learn like my classmates?'"

Additionally, the participant families of the focus groups denounce that sometimes the very same parents of their sons and daughters' classmates make negative comments about students with disabilities. This reinforces the discrimination that, ultimately, takes place inside classrooms.

> "Mothers said: the girl is weird, do not get close to her". (Peru).

> "There are parents that laugh at children, and kids learn that because they are not straightened out" (Peru).

Fears and overprotection are not just on the part of parents but of teachers as well, who limit the participation and inclusion of boys, girls and adolescents in leisure, sports and social activities in equal conditions with the excuse of protecting them to avoid any harm.

> "He does not get down to the school yard, he stays upstairs because the teacher is always alert that other children do not hit him but in spite of this his classmates stand up for him". (Sonia, Sergio´s mother, 11-year-old child with physical disability, Santa Marta, Colombia).

When a group of boys and girls from an inclusive educational institution was asked what difficulties may boys and girls with disabilities have to deal with in order to access school, they pointed at the building facilities (ramps, elevators), the need for teachers trained on inclusive education (taking into account that the institution has teachers trained on inclusive education and children see it as a necessary figure), being given walking sticks for better mobility and the fact that teachers must learn sign language. (Inclusive school in Paraguay).

Inclusion processes definitely show strong barriers focused on prejudice and preconceived opinions over the ability to learn that students with disabilities have and they portray them as a problem that generates disproportionate costs and requires specialized support. Consequently, there is refusal and resistance to admit them.

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"Children behave very naturally but they continue to absorb from adults, from society that these are permanently measuring and qualifying them as special children. She is not special, she is a girl". (Nicole, Sonia's mother, a 16-year-old girl with hearing impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

"I have visited twelve different schools approximately. Most of them stated that they did not accept children with Down syndrome. There exists a generalized concept that our children are aggressive, with behavioral problems and with lack of sphincter control, but they do not even give themselves a chance to know them". (Mother of a child with cognitive impairment, Bucaramanga, Colombia).

Barriers to participation

Participants affirm that once they enroll in school; students with disabilities face a series of barriers that hinder their participation in regular schools, if we define participation as the action and effect of taking or getting part of something, sharing and getting involved in any kind of activity in an intuitive and cognitive way.

Participation goes beyond presence; it includes self-esteem as a contribution to a better community.

In Peru, relatives of students with disabilities identified positive factors that promote participation in school such as partnerships established between educational institutions and organizations that follow inclusive education processes. Participant families of the focus groups highlight that, thanks to these partnerships, their sons and daughters with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in activities that promote their learning and their social and communicative skills have improved.

Besides, they stress that specialists of these organizations provide technical orientation that allows the ideal development of their sons and daughters, for example, the attendance of families to therapy sessions in order to learn reinforcement exercises to teach their sons and daughters at home. Additionally, families state that these organizations work in a collaborative way with the schools' authorities to train the community on inclusive education issues.

"The therapy center created a program to train teachers for the development of their career". (Peru).

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"Aynimundo supports us and it would be painful to lose this opportunity. There is no other **NGO** that goes to schools for this special purpose and gives information to children with disabilities, children without disabilities and teachers". (Peru).

However, within the groups of boys, girls and adolescents who do have inclusion it was said that students consider as something positive to have a facilitator of educational processes, to have collaborative peer learning, however teachers do not allow these practices inside classrooms:

"We really like helping Maira and sitting beside her to explain to her, but some support teachers, although not all of them, push us aside but then they do not help Maira, they are always distracted on something else. Sometimes Maira understands better from us than from support teachers, because they are not all day with her and consequently do not know the words she uses to express herself. They do not know her as we do. They should use us, her classmates, to be her support." (Private school at Bogotá. Age 8-20).

Belonging

The sense of belonging as a feeling a person has for being part of a group.

"We visited a district sign school but we did not like it since it was a primary classroom and the hearing-impaired children were kept inside a kind of fence, apart from the group". (Mother of a girl with hearing impairment. Bogota, Colombia).

Presence

Presence is not enough. Boys and girls and adolescents with disabilities ask to be esteemed as individuals with their achievements and contributions. (Esteem defined as the importance given to a person).

There is a lack of presence when the teacher does not give the same opportunities to participate in school activities. In that sense, students with disabilities complained before segregation acts, for example, when they were isolated in a common room or punished.

"When children misbehave, teachers make them stay against the wall and with their hands like this (on the wall)". (Peru).

"A long time ago when I was a little child, I studied in another school and I was always punished, maybe because I was a spoiled child". (Peru).

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> **"I do not want to go to school anymore, I am not wanted there. I was changed from my classroom because my teacher did not love me… It makes me sad because I remember when my previous teacher punished me".** **(Peru).**

Self-Esteem

On the other hand, some families pointed out as a barrier the attitude of rejection or discrimination toward students with disabilities by teachers, especially if students have a condition that, according to the teacher, may compromise the normal development of the class. As an example, a mother shared the experience of her son with cleft lip and language difficulties, who usually faced segregation and was placed apart from his classmates by his teacher, against his will to be with his friends.

> **"Ahead of a birthday party, the teacher did not give a birthday card to my son, even though the birthday child's mother did invite him. So I asked her, why not my son? I did not say anything to my son but he already knew. Then I bought him a piece of cake and told him that we could not make it in time to go to the party." (Peru)**

Finally, although we have mentioned that some relatives recognize the achievements and capability of their sons and daughters with disabilities to reach their goals, they also feel insecure about their sons and daughters' future and whether they will achieve the required autonomy and/or independence. **"I try to make my son socialize, to go alone to school, to be independent… we keep him inside a bubble, we do not have a life bought for them, what will we leave to our children?" (Peru).**

"How is he going to live by himself? How is his future going to be? How will he defend himself?" (Peru)

Barriers to Staying in School

The availability of inclusive participative opportunities within the educational system is not enough. Different strategies and actions are also required and they must be achieved by the educational staff (including principals and teachers) in order to strengthen those factors associated with permanence and graduation of boys, girls, adolescents, young and adults with disabilities in the educational system. This leads us to think about strategies related to affirmative actions and reasonable adjustments to ensure an inclusive education in terms of relevance, quality, effectiveness and efficiency and the elimination of barriers that limit participation in the educational field. The completion and graduation in the diverse school stages on equal terms with their peers without disabilities have been identified as a barrier to education in many countries.

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Grade Repetition

There are various arguments said by teachers to families to justify grade repetition, under the premise that their chronological age is different from their "mental age". Parents do not have the knowledge to argue about their sons and daughters' promotion with regard to their chronological age. Such concepts are based on integration models but not on inclusion models and will be explained later.

> "I do not see anything wrong, I say to myself: There may be a child who hits her because she is quite tall, so she will be with other children of her age who are more physically skilled. So, she may be rejected or hit".
> (Cecilia, Carolina´s mother, a 9-year-old girl with cognitive impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Extra-age/Over-age

Simultaneously to grade repetition; boys, girls and adolescents have been denied access to education due to students' extra-age (over-age) issues, and in several opportunities have been excluded and denied the support to promote from a grade or level leading to the only option of grade repetition.

> "What is your ambition, mother? He is not ready for higher grades; you may have him here until he is ready enough. They do not accept him because of his age". (Consuelo, Nicolás' mother, a 6-year-old boy with cognitive impairment, Bogota, Colombia).

Boys, girls and adolescents that have attended regular schools and nowadays attend segregated schools remember their experience as not being very positive. For example, they were asked: "Do you believe that if your teacher from your previous school had taught you differently taking into account that reading and writing was more difficult for you, you could have learnt and you would still be in that school? Their reply was 'our classmates would laugh at us because we are old and we still cannot write and read well'".

Leveling

There are no tools of pedagogic valuation that allow the identification of adjustments to favor the inclusion of students with disabilities in the academic level or grade which they should attend at their age.

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"They are short of proposals for children with disabilities. He attended a regular school but, as he could not express himself well, he was kept in the same grade for three years and could not advance." (Sonia, Juan´s mother, an 8-year-old boy with intellectual and hearing impairment, Santa Marta, Colombia).

Early termination

Despite the efforts, some participants expressed that some students with disabilities end their school stages prematurely and drop out from education because they believe they do not learn there, that what they are taught is irrelevant, they have low expectations… And in some occasions -generally as the rest of the students- they leave school or stop their studies due to the high costs to attend school, for example, daily mobility and ground transportation costs from their homes to school.

"I know an inclusive school, I am very grateful for the spaces it provides, but I can see that they do not truly know who our children are. A teacher told me: 'I see that your daughter is often alone'. Then I got to know home education and removed her from school. I want to see my daughter happy and she was not happy at school.'" (Nicol, Sonia´s mother, a 23-year-old young girl with hearing impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

"Rejection within the community: I have seen my daughter isolated for her low vision, she cannot walk alone, and everybody runs away from her, they make noises and leave her alone. She has felt much displaced, even the same teachers felt lazy to sit with h er and explain again, because it takes more time. Her teacher gets bored; I have seen that, I have experienced it." (Nicol, Sonia´s mother, a 23 year old young girl with visual impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

Integration vs. Inclusion

The GC4 has clearly defined integration and inclusion, but quite frequently school practices in institutions and classrooms propose strategies used based on integration making it difficult for these practices to be transformed into practices that promote inclusion.

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In FGD families, we can see how they accept their sons and daughters to be in classrooms only with classmates with disabilities and to stay after class to get additional support if they seek for leveling. These practices try to give an answer to "defective students" but not to "defective teachers" from an inclusive education perspective .

Integration is the process by which people with disabilities attend mainstream educational institutions with the conviction that they can adapt to the standardized requirements of such institutions.

Inclusion implies a process of a systemic reform that involves changes and modifications in the content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies of education to overcome obstacles with the perspective that all boys, girls and adolescents within the pertinent age groups experience equitable and participative education within an environment that best adapts to their needs and preferences.

> Inclusion of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities within mainstream classes without subsequent structural changes, for example in the organization, curricula or teaching/learning strategies does not constitute inclusion. Besides, integration does not ensure an automtic transition from segregation to inclusion. 2

Segregation persists in classrooms with parallel school curricula and low expectations towards people with disabilities:

"There is a girl with a disability in my classroom and sometimes, she tries to join the group. Maybe, if we could do more activities with her, since she is usually taken away during French or English lessons, she is not even in the same classroom; she is taken we do not know where and I believe that she learns more when she is with the rest of us. We must place higher expectations on them, not to have them exploit themselves, but tell them 'you can do it, do not give up', and that motivates them. If there is no motivation, then what do we do it for? It wouldn't make sense to come to school, nothing would make sense." (Private school, Bogota. Plan age 8-20).

"I think that people need help when they cannot understand something or find it difficult. Help must be personalized but sometimes I think they are set apart quite often. One thing is to make it personal and another thing is to exclude them." (Private school, Bogota. Age 8-20).

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Supports

Additionally, during discussions with the participants of the focus groups it became evident that the lack of support for students with disabilities is a barrier that directly involves students and their families, even with more emphasis when families do not have economic resources. In one of the testimonies, the father of an adolescent with Down syndrome is compelled to quit his job in order to fulfill the request of the school for the student to have a support person.

The parent started working as part of the cleaning staff of the school in order to be near his daughter: "When I went to the school for the first time, a teacher told me that someone had to stay with my daughter at school, so I had to quit my job I had with an engineer. It was shocking. I attended school for three years as if I were a student … It has a toll." (Peru).

"I was asked whether I could support my daughter to help her during her adaptation and to know her dynamics. The most important thing is that she is alright, so they asked me to stay". (Cecilia, Carolina´s mother, a 9-year-old girl with cognitive impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

"So they told me that there was no assisting person available, or support person, or nurse: if you wish to stay with your son all day in the classroom you may do it…" (Marina, Juan´s mother, a 7-year-old boy with cognitive and hearing impairment, Bogotá, Colombia.)

"Sonia told me: 'Mom, sometimes I do not understand subjects at school'. She sat for hours but she could not understand. Some teachers told her to wait so they would explain to her later but they didn´t… she was ignored, they disregarded her visual ability, she had to listen all the time, as in a master class, but the visual ability that is stronger in a person with hearing impairment was ignored. They should have used the ICTs, relaxation, spend more time with her." (Nicol, Sonia´s mother, a 23-year-old young girl with hearing impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

Barriers to Progress/Learning

Barriers to progress and learning include:

 i. Teacher training
 ii. Teacher practices
 iii. Low expectations
 iv. Underestimation
 v. What they are taught is useless for them. Curricula
 vi. Supports and adjustments

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vii. Assessments

Academic achievements in students with disabilities are a reason for concern. Currently, II is working with the World Bank together with Leonard Cheshire; they are looking for new ways to measure academic achievements from various settings where students receive education at a worldwide level.

> "When there are no suitable institutions, with un trained teachers and a lack of teaching material, it is very difficult that children be able to make progress in their learning and overcome their limitations." (Mother of a person with cognitive impairment. Cali, Colombia).

> "Teachers do not take up their roles as educators." (Mother of persons with cognitive impairment. Bucaramanga, Colombia).

> "I have seen gradual progress in my son. Sometimes, I get frustrated when I see that support is not enough to ensure my son´s education'. (Mother of a person with cognitive impairment. Bucaramanga, Colombia).

Participants in these FGD say that when students are impaired the necessary adjustments are not made and, most of the time, teachers have low expectations, curricula have little content and the national curricula are not considered in special education as the framework for the education provided by these institutions.

> "I have at this moment a case with regard to the head of the group, who is also the English teacher. If it appears difficult to learn Spanish for some people, then English proves much more difficult and to that we must add her visual impairment condition. So she (daughter) writes the words correctly but cannot make herself understood. She responds correctly to oral assessments but it becomes difficult when they are written due to the small handwriting of teachers, very few teachers adapt their handwriting in these cases. She knows many words in English, the days of the week, but they ask her to write them. So the teacher says that she needs a special institution, that this place is not for that. He has sent me the improvement plan and there is no difference with the regular plan, there isn't any adaptation."

> "We have a person specialized in visual impairment, but she works at primary school, then the speech therapist, but she is in high school, so I must go from high school to primary school: 'Excuse me, what can I do with this issue?' And the answer I get is: 'I have no time; I have more children to assist'. So I get help but still there is a long way to go. It is an inclusive school, but they do not do practice inclusion. It was very cruel for me to hear the teacher say:

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'Take your daughter out of this school, this is not for her.' (Carmen, Lucía´s mother, a 12-year-old girl with visual impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

"One of the mothers told us that she withdrew her son with hearing impairment from a regular school and searched for a special school for deaf people since he was not showing any improvement in his education, he just used to paint, draw and the teacher excused herself by saying that she neither had an assisting person nor enough time to support him to provide all the necessary adaptations fo r the child´s education "".
(Testimony from Peru).

During the FGD it is observed that parents identify their sons' and daughters' achievements in diverse ways; we can say that those who fight for the inclusion of their sons and daughters in inclusive schools have higher expectations toward their sons and daughters; but learning and literacy results and the development of abilities for their working life are pending issues for students with disabilities.

Teacher training

An important barrier for students with disabilities to achieve learning relates to the lack of teacher training on diversity education. Families consider that their sons and daughters do not participate in classroom activities that will contribute to their learning if, for example, they only paint, draw and even learners remark that there is no evidence of progress.
Likewise, families point out that teachers are afraid to teach students with disabilities and that, based on their experience, they considered that young teachers have more openness to support diversity than those with years of teaching expertise.

"According to legislation, there must be at least two students with disabilities per classroom, but teachers are afraid of that, they are not qualified." (Peru).

"The teacher told me: 'There is no assisting person. They treat you with indifference, they are tyrants, I am outraged with inclusion." (Peru)

"Teachers have no patience, they do not know how to proceed, they are stuck. Younger teachers are more patient." (Peru).

"Lack of teacher competence to create tools that help understanding'. (Mother of children with cognitive impairment." (Bucaramanga, Colombia).

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"During three years my daughter was in a leveling program in the same classroom and could not advance since she entered schooling late due to therapies she was attending. She started at 13 years old because we haven't received information about health issues, yet." (Nicol, Sonia´s mother, a 23-year-old girl with hearing impairment, Bogotá, Colombia).

Teacher practices

Just as students reported, families also mentioned that their sons and daughters do not regularly participate in school activities together with their classmates since teachers lack strategies to manage classrooms. For example, a mother mentions that teachers consider that students with disabilities should study in special schools:

"The problem arises from schools as children with disabilities are given a special treatment. Teachers say that their learning is slower, that they need some other kind of attention." (Peru).

A positive factor identified during the focus group discussions as a promoter of the permanence of students with disabilities in the school is the commitment and vocation of some teachers. Some students that participated in the consultation expressed that teachers are affectionate toward them; they do ludic activities to promote participation and some strengthening activities so that students with disabilities make progress in their learning achievements.

"My teacher supports me when I do not know something or when I am slow at writing". (Peru).

Likewise, relatives also point out as a positive factor the collective work that the educational community does to promote inclusion; that is to say, the articulation and collaboration of principals , students and parents to set up inclusive schools. In that sense, parents highlight that the role of the principal is essential to promote an inclusive educational community. Likewise, they commend the participation of families in democratic spaces inside the institution. For example, a father states that he has been named president of the Asociación de Padres de Familia (APAFA), and that it allows for active participation and work together to promote an inclusive school. However, the success of one school does not get mainstreamed to others.

"The principal of the school is a very kind woman. My son is in a good school where the principal and teachers get involved, children are kings every time it is Down Syndrome Day". (Peru).

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Boys, girls and adolescents identify that in their school there are teaching practices that neither implement flexible curricula nor promote the school success.

> *"People with disabilities learn in a different way from us. They have their own rhythm. Then I feel that teachers do not use the necessary tools, they only focus on their personal academic success." (Private school. Bogotá. Age 8–20).*

"Maira is a girl with Down syndrome. She learns a little bit slower, I wish she could be accepted. Everybody learns with effort… but teachers do not press Maira, they let her do what she wants. She is apart, in a corner, sitting doing nothing. And the teachers do not let us help her. Once, I was glad that an Engl ish teacher pressed Maira during a year and she learnt a lot of English but she could not learn anything about the other subjects since teachers do not pay attention to her." (Private school at Bogotá. Age 8 20).

Promotions

Leveling, chronological age vs. "mental age", assessment and standardized tests and the lack of personalized educational plans are still barriers to the promotion of students with disabilities.

> *"My son has been delayed, he is 17 years old and he is in fifth grade at primary school. When the end of the year arrives, teachers reply is that he does not have the abilities required to pass (…). They are in a separate classroom but they do not have specialized staff assigned to help them." (José and María, Luis´ parents, a 17-year-old boy with hearing impairment. Santa Marta, Colombia).*

Low Expectations

Previously we have identified low expectations from the families´ side and from the teachers with respect to the academic achievements of the students with disabilities, especially those with an intellectual disability. A positive factor, however, identified from the engagement of some of the participants is the acknowledgement of the potential and achievements of some persons with disabilities. Children and adolescents that participated in this process valued positively the learning they reached at school, such as learning math, reading, writing, sharing games with their classmates and painting. They also referred to their long-term goals: to become teachers, football players, "youtubers" and vets in the future.

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"We, deaf people, show our strength, I am a fighter." (Peru).

With regard to barriers to learning of people with disabilities we could mention the teaching of less formative activities where teachers give more importance to artistic activities.

"I like painting. My teacher teaches me step by step. I like art very much." (Peru).

Underestimation

Even though most of the students expressed that all people without exception have the right to attend school, most of the families did not know the responsibilities of schools and they justified discriminatory practices.

"I was aware that my daughter does not have the ability to read fast or learn numbers, but I did not expect that by the time she finishes school she can read ." (Peru).

"I cannot demand too much from school. The teacher has done everything she could. She must handle 30 children." (Peru).

What they are taught is not relevant for them

We need to understand the value of flexible curricula that keep general objectives for all students, but that give different opportunities to access them, that is, to teach based on social, cultural diversity, on students' different ways to learn, giving all the same opportunities to learn and participate.

"What they taught to my son is useless for him".

Supports and Adjustments

We cannot deny the absence of supports and adjustments is one of the more important barriers to the success of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities in inclusive environments.

By means of support and reasonable adjustments it is ensured that these students can easily move with the maximum autonomy within their environments; and, in that way, ensure their development, learning and participation for the equalization of opportunities and effective guaranty of rights.

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Reasonable adjustments are defined as the necessary and adequate actions, strategies, supports, resources or modifications of the educational system and school management, based on the specific needs of each student. These needs persist despite the adoption of the Learning Global Design. Reasonable adjustments are put into action after a thorough assessment of students with disabilities.

As an example, parents showed that an educational institution has sign interpreters in primary school but not in secondary school.

> *"We, deaf people, can go to school but if the school does not have a sign interpreter, we can be rejected." (Private school. Bucaramanga. José – 18 years old – hearing impairment)*

> *"Children with disabilities can participate as any other children do, even though they have different abilities, they are human beings like us." (Private school. Cali. Valeria, a 10-year-old girl).*

> *"The way of learning is not different; unless they have a mental retardation and need more support, they can still learn." (Private school. Cali. Valeria, a 10-year-old girl).*

Accessibility to Information and Learning

As it has been previously mentioned, some relatives also recognize the potential and achievement of people with disabilities. Although they also recognize that their sons and daughters show some difficulties to develop certain abilities such as reading, writing, walking, among others, they are provided the necessary support to avoid a barrier to their learning and development. For example, a father said that he bought pictograms so they can communicate by means of pictures.

> *"They can succeed even over those persons that have it all. It is admirable… I feel so moved." (Peru).*

> *"They are capable, unstoppable. I have a child with a disability and I see this in him. He achieves whatever he wants and I feel proud of him. I´ve seen how capable he is of searching information to do his homework. We stop ourselves lots of times." (Peru).*

Simultaneously, many families admitted regular schools as a place of development for their sons and daughters with disabilities. During the focus groups, parents identified and appreciated advantages for their sons and daughters to study in regular schools:

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"Schools should support them. Children must understand that all people must be equally treated. Is there any reason to separate them? There are exclusive schools for some people, why? What is the purpose of that wall?" (Peru)

Most families recognize social aspects and behavior regulations as achievements for development as well as daily functional abilities.

"If there was no inclusion, where should I send my son? They were confined before… with inclusion our children have more freedom". (Peru)

"The biggest damage for my daughter is to keep her hidden, for that reason I believe regular schools are good". (Peru)

"What I wish is for my child to learn how to behave in a real society. Now she complies with schedules and shifts". (Peru)

"There is a lack of material. My daughter has low vision and she is given an assessment like all the other children, but she cannot see it. I have requested school to use larger fonts, not to just enlarge the page. I also suggested using color pictures since she cannot see in black and white. I have even wondered whose responsibility it is, mine as a mother or the teachers´". (Mother of a person with visual impairment. Bogota. Colombia).

Boys, girls and adolescents identify that the work of support groups for school progress sometimes turns into segregation and intimidation strategies.

"Teachers use support groups many times, too many times to intimidate Laura (girl with Down syndrome). If Laura doesn´t want to do a specific exercise, they threaten her with calling the support group to take her somewhere else. Teachers threaten her frequently, I can understand they are under too much stress, but that is not something nice to hear. They shouldn't use the support group to threaten children. (Private school in Bogota. Age 8-20).

"They turn support into something bad, into something different from its purpose". (Private school in Bogota. Age 8-20.)

Assessments

Individual plans used as tools to ensure teaching and learning processes for students, based on pedagogical and social appreciation, that includes reasonable required supports and adjustments,

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among them curricular, educational, infrastructural and any others needed to ensure learning, participation, permanence and promotion are not a strength of the region's institutions.

As an example, a participant in the consultation pointed out that lack of tools for an individual assessment is a barrier for the students with disabilities' learning and promotion.

In this sense, they express that some teachers recommend families that students with disabilities should retake the grade due to the difficulties they face when assessing their competence achievements:

> *"They always did the same thing, she had to pass to second grade but she was put back in first grade. I told the teacher that she was older, but the only reply was: 'What should I do?'" (Peru).*

This barrier is clearly seen in daily school life of students with disabilities.

> *"Every time I do something wrong, I get a C." (Peru, student with Down syndrome).*

Some boys, girls and adolescents express that grades are more important for teachers than the learning process and the development of abilities for life.

> *"For them, assessments are essential. People may be good although not brilliant academically but they may know how to talk or express their ideas. Teachers should try other evaluation modalities. Avoid giving more importance to the assessment than to the person. (Private school. Bucaramanga. Age 10-18)*

Barriers to Welfare

Even though welfare of students with disabilities at school is related to many positive factors and the abovementioned barriers, in this section we aimed to point out aspects and situations identified by students participants in the consultation process, in relation to the inclusive culture in schools and attitudinal barriers arising from the process towards inclusive education, from the stages of coexistence and discrimination.

School Coexistence

Particularly, a student with hearing impairment participated in a discussion group with other boys and girls aged between 7 and 12 years old. This caused the rest of the boys and girls to be surprised at the way this participant expressed himself, using sign language with his hands. However, this was not a reason for demotivation of the other students. On the contrary, they said they would like to learn sign language in order to be able to communicate with other people with hearing impairment.

"Most children know how to treat others and what they have to do and I am very satisfied that the school is prepared for the inclusion of children. It is a high joy… Here they work altogether." (Peru).

An important aspect for the welfare of students with disabilities is related to the difficulties for supportive and fair school coexistence between all students. Even though some students expressed that they feel cared for and protected by their classmates, on the other hand, they also mentioned that diversity and differences are not always respected inside classrooms.

"When a child slapped me in the face I was very sad. He hit me 'just because'." (Peru)

"I am bullied because I am a little… What's the word? Nerd. Sometimes they call me 'dumb', 'killjoy', 'boring'. But children only laugh at me and no one else. That is because I am intelligent but they are not so intelligent. The do not know how much equals 5x10." (Peru).

Participants with and without disabilities say that they do not like to have "scolding", "terrifying", "frightening" or "shouting" teachers.

Coexistence inside schools presents several attitudinal barriers:

"I do not like my hearing classmates because sometimes they make faces and say: 'we have to be patient, he is deaf'. I don't like my social sciences teacher because she does not explain well. If you cannot do things well, she says that you do not know, that you are not interested and then she makes gestures of disapproval. I don´t like her". (Private school. Bucaramanga. Ages 8-20).

"For me, barriers at school are relationships, friendship. Sometimes it is pitiful to have friends like them because they cannot do the same things we do; they do not think as we do. Suddenly many people say 'we have a more advanced thinking than them'. Sometimes I have seen some students who say: 'do not look at me, do not touch me, what are you doing? G et away, you cannot be here, you are not part of our group', and stuff like that." (Private school. Bogota. Age 8-20).

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> *"A classmate has mobility difficulties. She arrived filled with energy, willing to make friends, but many girls try to make it clear for her that she cannot do a lot of things and she feels bad about it. They tell her she can´t, that it will be too difficult for her. Valentina arrived with high self esteem but it was destroyed by the other children."*
> *(Private school. Bogota. Age 8 20).*

In Paraguay, boys and girls shared their experiences and said that it was sometimes difficult to adapt to "cliques". When they were asked the reason for not being able to join these "groups", they did not want to go further, they just said "they are mean to us".

When asking about the tale's character (a boy with Down syndrome): "if Julio were to come to this school, would he face any problem?" Many replied **NO**. Those who replied **YES** said that the main trouble would be bullying ("intimidation").

At school they speak Guarani. The solidarity of students was reflected in the following conversation (All that follows was expressed in guarani language, with the support of the principal who performed the interpreting :

> *Teacher.* **Mba´epa rejapota eguereKoro peteî angiru ndohechaiva (What would you do if you have a friend who cannot see?)**
>
> *Child:* che ahugata hendive, ahata hendive cantinape ha ha´eta chupe mba´epa ho´use. Ha upéi ha´eta chupe ome´ê hagua chéve la iplata ikatuhaguaicha apaga. (I would play with him. I would go with him to a bar and ask him what he wishes to eat and ask him to give me the money to pay for his meal).
>
> *Teacher:* **Mba´epa pejapota peguerekoro peteî compañero oipuruva silla de ruedas. (What would you do if you have a friend who is in a wheelchair?)**
>
> *Children:* che ahugata hendive, aipytivôta chupe ha oguerehata chupe recréope. Avei ahugata hendive partido ha ombohasata chupe la pelota. Ndahejai mo´ai chupe hiaño. (I would play with him, hug him and share the break time with him. We would play a match and I would pass the ball to him. I will not leave him alone).

About this issue, some girls said that people without disabilities usually have feelings of envy towards people with disabilities with comments and expressions that hurt their self-esteem.

> *"The most important barrier is our own thinking and others' thinking. In Valentina's case, it could be envy because she has been very brave and strong in many situations. But, due to*

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some bad comments, she now has made a barrier to her thinking and believes she cannot do many things. Sometimes she backs down and says 'I can´t'. Sometimes people do this because they envy you, not because you have a disability." (Private school. Bogota. Age 8-20).

"Many times, we care too much about what others think of us. In the same way, many people with disabilities, as Valentina, are affected by what others think. First she was a very strong and brave girl, who has been through many surgeries. But as we are aff ected by what others think of us, when they say we can't, we start to ask ourselves, could I? When you accept yourself but someone doesn't, you start to think whether you accept yourself." (Private school. Bogota. Age s 8 20).

Participants also realize that barriers do not only appear to people with disabilities but among those without disabilities:

"Not only there are barriers to girls with disabilities, they also exist among us". (Private school. Bogota. Ages 8-20).

On the other hand, there is a perception that people with disabilities also distance themselves, they do not accept themselves and do not trust in their skills. An adolescent with disabilities said that the lack of respect by her classmates is a barrier for her:

"The biggest barrier is disrespect, we are all equal….That is what people think of people with disabilities. When you are told you have a disability, go away, they exclude you as if you were a bad person". (Private school. Bogota. Age 15).

The way a person is usually addressed also divides students with and without disabilities:

"Let's be open. Do not judge people by their physical aspect or their personality. I am a normal girl, but I do not like to be called like that, because I feel I am not an ordinary person, since we are all special, we all have strengths and weaknesses". (Private school. Bucaramanga. Age 10).

People with disabilities are aware of how they are perceived by others:

"I do not want them saying that a disability is a limitation but a strength although I still don´t know how to use it". (Private school. Bucaramanga. Age 10-18).

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"We are not so different from those without disabilities or that we are the ones that have to adapt, as professionals say". (Private school. Bucaramanga. Age 10-18).

"We feel sorry when we are stared at. It is very difficult." (Private school. Cali. 18-year-old adolescent. Hearing impairment).

In Paraguay, boys, girls and adolescents that left regular school and are now attending special schools say: *"If we have to go again to those schools I will stay with my mom working at the market, it is not funny to be laughed at." (Paraguay).*

"With this group we could perceive the frustration with regard to the experiences in schools where they were included. They recognize that their experiences were not good. They felt annoyed by the jokes and they would not go back to those schools because they felt mistreated… We also noticed that neither families nor special schools explain anything about the actual barriers, so they believe to be the problem because they are slower… They teach without respecting the different levels, needs and abilities and the lack of diverse strategies as well as the little or lack of work on the cultural aspect, where values as respect and equity concepts are not addressed". (Facilitator from Fundación Saraki).

Discrimination

One of the positive factors is the emotional strength of some families to face the barriers that their sons and daughters with disabilities face in their educational pathway. Most of them recognize the necessity to multiply efforts for their sons and daughters to achieve their goals.

"We are very different from normal families and we have to keep on fighting for our children." (Peru).

"As a mother you have to be creative with cooking, with everything. You do not have to lay hindrances , but to overcome that barrier. Everything has a solution but death." (Peru)

"My children are the most valuable jewel and I will fight for them." (Peru)

Another important factor is the positive attitude of families with regard to the discrimination their sons and daughters with disabilities are exposed to. Most mothers point out the need to teach society how to treat their sons and daughters by guiding and raising awareness in the surrounding community. In the same way, a father reports that his daughter with Down syndrome's siblings felt ashamed of her. However, he tried to give them information and inspire them to be her support.

"I started to discuss with the children. At that moment you felt outraged when seeing your child alone… Why does nobody play with him?…Today all children in the neighborhood look for him to play. Everybody is happy". (Peru)

"My son is called the pink panther so I have to talk to the child that annoys him and explain to him that he should play without shouting at him". (Peru)

"As a mother I have to defend my son… Step by step, you try to make other children be

Nevertheless, these factors are the result of a long process. Many participant families recognize as a barrier having faced difficulties for the need of support for their sons and daughters to be accepted. They share the sadness felt upon receiving the news about their sons and daughters' condition and, even some participants recognize that it is still hard to accept.

"First I took him to San Juan de Dios Hospital and they told me he is deaf and dumb. It hurts a lot receiving that news, I have not been able to overcome this yet." (Peru)

Finally, participant families of the focus groups express that one of the most important barriers they face to fight for inclusive education and, generally, for the development and welfare of their sons and daughters is the discrimination of the society towards people with disabilities. Parents point out that the community does not know the achievements of people with disabilities and that it leads to jokes, pity feelings and indifference to their sons and daughters' needs.

"In Peru people are indifferent. For example, when there is someone with visual impairment, they will not help him to cross the street." (Peru)

"They are going to laugh at me". (Paraguay)

"It happened that every passenger laughed at me in the bus when I communicated with my son in sign language. As a mother I was ashamed and stopped the conversation. I tried not to talk to him so people would stop looking at us. In the neighborhood it is sad to see my child being isolated, I used to cry, powerless, while looking through the window." (Peru)

"They will tease him". (Paraguay)

"My daughter likes avocados and the lady that sells them wanted to give her some for free. My daughter wanted to pay the lady for them because it was part of her job. The lady replied, 'Oh, poor girl'." (Peru)

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"They laugh at him because he can't read at 12 years old." (Paraguay)

"It is so sad to see how human beings, especially in our country, where most are ignorant, the only thing they do is laugh at each other instead of supporting them". (Peru)

"They will not feel comfortable". (Paraguay)

"One day a big boy told my child he had a horse face. I arrived home, hugged my child while crying, and then after he went to his bedroom I continued crying and hugged him strongly again to bear that situation." (Peru)

"They may laugh at him." (Paraguay)

In order for their sons and daughters to be accepted and respected within the school system, parents were in charge of proposing actions for their sons and daughters to be known and positively appreciated by everybody.

"We entered the third kindergarten and I warned the teacher that my daughter is some-times rough but not aggressive. She used to take off the garnishment that other girls used on their heads. Other mothers began to say that the "sick girl" used to pull the other girls' hair. So I went and introduced myself: 'I am the mother of the girl you are talking about right now. I would like you to give me the opportunity to apologize first, in case you see this as an aggression, but I would like you to understand that my daughter is just a girl like your children, almost the same age. She lacks aggressiveness in her thoughts and heart, she just has a disability condition and for that reason she behaves in that way. We are working on those issues so she can realize, from another point of view, what she must and must not do'. So the parents stayed looking at me and began to say: 'Please, excuse me, forgive me'. I asked the teachers to let me show them the content of a CD about a girl in a wheelchair. I showed it not only to that group of parents but to all, since my daughter started to have some bad behavior and was recognized for that and not for positive things. I was allowed to talk and that helped to change the situation". (Cecilia, Carolina´s mother, a 9-year-old girl with cognitive impairment. Bogota. Colombia).

These are individual searches that, many times, end up with parents abandoning the search of a school for their sons and daughters. Only one mother said that she asked for help at the Education Secretariat:

"I looked for a public school for my daughter for five years. She was not accepted be-cause of her cognitive disability. I went many times to the Education Secretariat to ask for a place at

school for her. After insisting on that, I managed my daughter to start school at 12 years old". (Mother of a girl with cognitive impairment. Bucaramanga. Colombia).

"There is a lack of communication by the government about programs for deaf children. We got to know this school accidentally. There is no information on the website or in the town hall offices." (Mother of a person with cognitive disability. Bucaramanga. Colombia).

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Chapter 4. Findings derived from the analysis of the information collected

"Sometimes people don't want to hear the truth because they don't want their illusions destroyed."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Classrooms are the place where philosophy, values and principles of inclusive education are implemented. In the research, through their discussions, boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities turned into the eyes and ears for the daily identification of the cause for exclusion of students with disabilities. Their messages about the barriers to education may not be new, but they strengthen the findings of other research. Besides, they offer hope for boys, girls and adolescents who understand their role and the possibilities to build social capital and networks that will support participation and the sense of belonging of groups that have been systemically and systematically excluded and then ensure that Inclusive Communities = Stronger communities are built.

This report aims at providing the point of view of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities about the exclusion suffered daily in classrooms and schools. Educational systems' failure to be inclusive can be also heard from the families that joined us.

Boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families say:

Boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities and their families usually face obstacles to have accessibility, participation, permanence, self-esteem and learning in regular schools and classrooms in the Americas region and been recognized through multiple instances and research. Many of them are reflected on all discussion groups of this initiative and are described in the second part of these findings.

In the first part we highlight the new aspects from the perspective of boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families regarding this initiative towards exclusion of students with disabilities. All this will be the basis for the recommendations to be introduced in the next chapter to bring about the required transformations to – "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"[1]

The initiative discovers

1 Discrimination for disability cannot be **claimed**, it must be observed from the focus group discussions in different ways. Families are usually content with any service provided, very few challenge and ask for better education for their sons and daughters, they only justify the lack of results as being due to their sons and daughters' disabilities. Principals and teachers evaluate in the same way the lack of progress by students and justify it as a result of their disability but not of the lack of teacher training or of teaching/ learning strategies that respond to diverse ways of learning.

It can be also observed from the focus group discussions from the boys, girls and adolescents' perspective the difficulties to make claims to promote transformations. For example, despite having clearly identified teachers' practices and supports that exclude and minimize the learning of classmates with disabilities, children that have the possibility to report this in the group discussions, opt to not question their teachers or ask to help their classmates themselves, something that can put on display a sense of fundamental solidarity among classmates. Students with disabilities depend on schools' decisions and the level of perseverance of their families.

2 There **exists** satisfaction in families, teachers, leaders to whom any education/program given to students with disabilities is acceptable and for that reason families are **thankful** for having a place at school. Teachers do not **measure results**, schools and educational systems **do not report them** either. In various ways, boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities express their **low expectations** and point out the justification made by teachers when identifying that the problem lies in the student disability and not in the deficient system and practices proposed as inclusive education.

3 Inclusive education as a right and its implications are not very clear for families. **Lack of knowledge** and leadership is also expressed by the boys, girls and adolescents consulted. They say that teachers are not sufficiently clear about strategies for inclusion in classroom practices.

4 Families expressed that students with disabilities do not **learn** because what they are taught is useless for them. On the other hand, boys, girls and adolescents state that teachers take them outside, away from their classmates who could also help them, but are not allowed to do so.

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5   There are factually not **enough families** that choose and/or fight for inclusion. This includes parents of boys, girls and adolescents without disabilities.

6   Inclusive education is not **systemic** in any of the consulted countries. This is identified through the analysis of the obstacles in the FGD. This lack of systemic change may be associated with the concept of "cognitive dissonance" developed by Leon Festinger. Many people who fight to keep their educational systems outdated and segregated refuse to consider human rights of people with disabilities and the advantages of an educational system that recognizes the individual needs of each student. Even though there is no evidence that segregation leads to better results, people only know these systems and keep advocating for them.

Besides, through this initiative we also offer a reflection about The Salamanca Statement and the CRPD constantly referred to in all research as guidelines for the building of inclusive education.

The analysis of the FGD's information causes concern about concepts from The Salamanca Statement which states that inclusive education is **a process**; followed by the CRPD indicating that some aspects may be of **progressive realization**. These concepts have been misleadingly understood that any small step, disarticulated from the regular educational system and often without a significant impact, can be regarded as an achievement towards inclusive education and that, in many instances it may be used to justify delays in the development and/or implementation of systemic and systematic improvement plans in education promoting inclusion.

7   Families are **overloaded, with little support** for them and their sons and daughters. High levels of exclusion turn into obstacles to participate with them and with boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities in an organized way within inclusive education processes. Families, as well as people with disabilities want inclusion but they do not know the right to education of their sons and daughters. They act individually in search for a solution to their problems and are divided by disabilities; divided between inclusive education and the sense of protection perceived from a segregated education; they do not identify the value of working together or demand better education for all.

"I loved to know their life experiences. Sometimes we focus on our own disability. I am a blind person and may not know about your concern but I can realize that we all have the same problem even though we have different disabilities. Sharing these experiences makes us more powerful and that seems pretty nice. The law does not

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say deaf people, it states disabilities. We can achieve things together. (Nicol, Sonia´s mother, a 23-year-old girl with hearing disability. Bogota. Colombia).

The initiative confirms

1 **Discrimination for disability** has been identified as the most important problem by all the participants in the focus groups, boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families; through the context of special education, integration or inclusion; in public or private education.

   Participants of focus groups identify expressions of discrimination through various actions of the actors within the context in which each of the groups participates.

2 Through the **FGD attitudes, beliefs** and **feelings** towards people with disabilities are identified to give rise to most actions that turn into barriers to inclusive education in the case of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities. These barriers especially affect expectations, welfare and the perception of safety in boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities in regular schools.

3 **Inequity** is totally underestimated as well as its cost within families. Not only global statistics estimate that at least a third part of boys, girls and adolescents that are out of school have some disability, but also FGD and reports issued by the organizations that are members of II, identify inequity as a barrier to accessibility, participation, permanence, learning and welfare of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities within the educational system.

4 Many boys, girls and adolescents that were consulted attend special schools or have quit education. Education of persons with disabilities **is not a priority** in most governments' agendas.

5 The wrong idea that inclusive education consists of educating students with disabilities still persists in many people. However, boys, girls and adolescents without disabilities identify their differences and support needs as being similar to those classmates identified with a disability. **Inclusive education for all.**

6 Boys, girls and adolescents in the focus groups do not consider that their classmates with disabilities receive **quality education** and, on the other side, families express similar concerns. It is necessary to link inclusive education with the improvement of quality education for all students with disabilities.

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7   Boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities are disproportionately out of schools. This is part of the subjacent **prejudice** against people with disabilities; especially those people with intellectual disability and the subconscious belief that their lives are less worth than others. This is the main reason for exclusion in schools and the society.

Chapter 5. Recommendations

"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them"

Albert Einstein

The work carried out to organize the consultation with boys, girls and adolescents with and without disabilities and their families in Colombia, Paraguay and Peru and the findings through the FGD offer the opportunity to make some recommendations and provide strategies to advance the agenda of inclusive education in participant countries, with potential extrapolation to other countries in the region.

Governments, school districts, principals and teachers have a professional moral and ethical obligation to provide safe and effective educational practices and opportunities for every male and female student. The fact that some fathers and mothers ask for segregated education is not a valid reason for teachers and school districts to support such a choice when the research proves full evidence supporting inclusion. The educational system through school districts and teachers uses public funds and such funds must be used in the best interest of boys, girls and adolescents and the society, and as such, funds must not be used to separate students with disabilities from the rest since there is no educational justification.

Offering segregation at the request of some fathers and mothers is a sign that professional and ethical responsibilities have been abandoned and reveals their own prejudices.

Chapter 1 refers to the recommendations arising from the various reports of the CRPD Committee to Latin American countries; the consultation of the Regional Network for Inclusive Education (RREI, Spanish acronym) to its member organizations and the work of Catalyst for Inclusive Education in the region.

The lack of implementation of these recommendations is pointed out by the allies for this initiative and the study confirms once again that the Agenda towards an inclusive education is not progressing. Today, this coincides with current discussions worldwide referred to as the "Crisis of Education", even more pressing for male and female students with disabilities who are disproportionately excluded from education, their learning is not measured and the quality of what they receive is not relevant for them. There is a need to strengthen families as co-responsible for ensuring quality education for their sons and daughters, and boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities to be able to ask for and be vigilant that the education in their schools and classrooms has the elements of inclusive education, (GC4). The more families choose inclusion and the more available it is, the more expensive and harder keeping segregated classes becomes.

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In this Chapter we propose recommendations for the strengthening of organizations of families and people with disabilities and their members so that they can recognize and demand equitable and inclusive quality education, in three areas :

- Generating coherence in the various actors on inclusive education;

- Building leadership and collaboration,

- Ensuring that the quality of education is understood to require inclusion and equity.

"They divide us all the time, deaf people, cognitive people, we must unite and build"

Raising Awareness among the various actors on inclusive education

All the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified the CRPD, all the governments are committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The transformation of our world; and regarding education, the SDG4 states: "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

For that reason, governments have the responsibility to generate a systemic transformation of the educational system towards an inclusive education in accordance with the provisions of GC4, which describes the implications and elements of inclusive education.
It is the duty of governments to lead the mainstreaming process among the various actors on the issue of inclusive education and its implications for educational policies, culture and practices.

Recommendations to governments

1   It is imperative for governments to promote strategies that generate **transformations in the social imaginaries** on the perspective of Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities to achieve attitudinal changes. Schools are the ideal settings to start, "boys, girls and adolescents studying together are learning to live together". It is necessary that the process design contributes to the implementation of real Inclusive Education.

2   Governments need to strengthen the **generation of a clear conceptualization** on the elements of quality inclusive education and the implications for the educational system in the framework of the GC4 for **all** actors.

   These elements contribute to quality inclusive education: a clear and strong vision; laws and policies based on the discovery of mechanisms and accountability procedures; school

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practices based on a culture of respect and cooperation; classroom practices that meet the needs of all male and female students, associations of people with disabilities, families, educational authorities, teachers and community leaders. It is necessary to improve integration, question mainstreaming/general education, eradicate separate classes or education instructions, question curricula, measure academic results of male and female students with disabilities and end exclusion.

3   Governments must look for strategies to **empower boys, girls and adolescents in classrooms** so that they can be vigilant and monitor the best practices for male and female students with disabilities. Boys, girls and adolescents without disabilities can be watchmen and in the everyday life advocate against the injustice and discrimination suffered by male and female students in the classroom.

As settings to evaluate teaching practices, classrooms have been identified as places of not easy access for other teachers or evaluators and even for the students' families. However, the initiative proved that classmates identify discrimination by teachers, other boys, girls and adolescents and the difficulties regarding teachers' support strategies which turn them into a valuable monitoring element.

4   Governments must **ensure the adoption of a new paradigm** to move towards an inclusive system that recognizes the intrinsic rights of people with disabilities.

The initiative's proposal is to consider it from the theories of change, specifically the concept of "positive disruption". **We keep saying that positive disruption is what is necessary in the current educational systems**, that is to say a change that, instead of being gradual, shifts a paradigm.

5   Governments must **design national plans for the implementation of inclusive education**: as a response to the gap between speeches, policies and the reality that people with disabilities and their families face in the region, identified once again through the FGD in this initiative.

6   Governments must **seek agreements with teacher organizations and teacher training institutions concerning the skills they need**. Many of the current trainings that allegedly prepare teachers for inclusion are wrongly focused on various disabilities instead of Universal Design for Learning and pedagogical strategies that would improve quality for all.

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7 Governments must lead the **development of critical actors**, who understand what equitable and inclusive quality education is and entails, looking for alliances and collaboration of relevant actors. This is a financially sustainable and scalable way to reach a critical mass for change, joining voices from various organizations and networks that include any type of disabilities, civil organizations that work for the improvement of the quality of education and those related to human rights as minimum standards, facilitating their mobilization and advocacy to monitor the transformations in the educational system.

It must include:

a. People from the government who are responsible for education, especially decision-makers in the educational system, to identify the elements of inclusive education that are key for the improvement of and support the long-term planning in the implementation of equitable and inclusive quality education.

b. Organizations of people with disabilities and their families to participate and raise their positions in all the places where their educational policies and practices are discussed in order that the voices of male and female students with disabilities are heard. People with intellectual disabilities and their families as essential critical actors are supported by organizations in the sectors of education, human rights and disabilities to generate an understanding of the value of inclusion and to have a clear idea of their requests to the educational system, schools, principals and teachers.

c. Representatives from the countries where there are international and funding organizations such as the ones in the region: **UNICEF, UNESCO, IADB, World Bank**, non-governmental organizations that are working on policies and development plans and others in order that everybody has a common language about inclusive education aligned with the **CRC, CRPD, GC4 and 2030 Agenda** and support practices reflecting them.

Leadership and collaboration

Successful inclusion experiences have shown the necessity to count on brave leaders at meso (educational system), macro (education secretariats or similar) and micro level (schools and classrooms) for more than 10 years.
There is a need to invest resources in the alliances and partners and in the strengthening of their capacity.

Recommendations to UNICEF

As a strategic partner in this field, **UNICEF can promote that the technical assistance processes about education in the different countries last, at least, two cooperation periods (10 years) to strengthen local actors' capacities, mobilization of resources and alliances with other partners of cooperation such as IADB, UNESCO, the World Bank, non-governmental organizations and partnerships. Overall, it is recommended that:**

1 **UNICEF advocates for the Ministries of Education and decision makers to perform an effective transition process from special education to inclusive education to make this right a reality .**

2 **UNICEF provides technical assistance to governments to accelerate progress towards equitable and inclusive quality education that promotes lifelong learning opportunities for boys, girls and adolescents, considering the recommendations made by the Committee of the CRPD.**

Little progress: Being signatories of the CRPD has not led to better inclusive education. Progress in the implementation of inclusive education has been slow, with serious inconsistencies throughout the time even with respect to those answers given to recommendations made by the Committee of the CRPD to country reports and alternative reports of partnership.

3 **UNICEF promotes the participation of partnerships in special coalitions for education and organizations of and for persons with disabilities – that have expertise on educational practices to promote inclusion to a wide diversity of students–, to exercise their co-responsibility on a permanent basis and be financially sustainable. Some key factors for the participation of these organizations are the sectorial discussions within the Ministries of Education and the national consultations about this issue.**

4 **UNICEF supports the engagement and awareness raising of mothers, fathers and communities about the importance of inclusive education in regular schools and the impact that it has on boys, girls and adolescents to reach his or her maximum potential, which reduces segregation and exclusion.**

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Quality education together with Equity and Inclusion

Apart from establishing education as a right for all people, the findings from the information of the FGD of boys, girls and adolescents and families; the experiences of the participant members in the initiative and the work developed by Catalyst for Inclusive Education suggest rethinking the strategies to approach inclusive education with a critical eye to the global concern about the quality of education, the 'crisis in education', which discussions **have not identified** the need to establish the concept that **quality** cannot be achieved without **equity** and **inclusion**.

The systemic transformation required by the educational systems towards inclusive education must be linked up to the **new challenges** that education faces at a global level, identified by international organizations that work for education such as GEM, UNICEF, UNESCO, IABD, the World Bank, the Organization of American States (OAS).
Inclusive education cannot be seen anymore as an addition to regular education.

Bodies and International Agencies, the *High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*, funding bodies and governments are bound to reflect what is set forth in the SDG4 "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" including male and female students with disabilities.

1. International and multilateral bodies and the HLPF must assure that discussions on **quality education** include all boys, girls and adolescents in the country. It is imperative that it is accompanied by **inclusion** and **equity**. This should be expected from the discussions of the HLPF in 2019, *'Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality'*.

    a. Inclusion as a process to help male and female students overcome those barriers that limit their attendance, participation and achievements.

    b. Equity means ensuring that there is a concern about impartiality to consider the education for all male and female students as being of equal importance. This includes gender equality as the understanding of women and men to have the same conditions to fulfil their human rights and to contribute to the economic, social, cultural and political development and enjoy them .

    Education equity1 must have, at least, the principle of equal opportunities, without discrimination from legislation and practices supported by **Non- Refusal provisions**.

2. International and multilateral bodies must acknowledge that inclusive education must reach those students with higher vulnerability to exclusion such as "…the poor and the most disadvantaged, including working children, remote rural dwellers and nomads, and ethnic

and linguistic minorities, children, young people and adults affected by conflicts, AIDS, hunger and poor health; and those with special learning needs"2, and to associate it with the improvement of education for all.

From the excluded groups mentioned above, most of them only need some minor adjustments to "enter" the current educational systems. Then, these systems can, as they are doing so far, make up for the weakness of the current systems, increasing the range of coverage of these groups. Their necessity is, mainly, of access and some time-bound reasonable adjustments.

Here we emphasize the need to guarantee the systemic changes to respond to students with disabilities and, mainly, of those with intellectual disabilities, as a task to be accomplished in the region.

3   International and multilateral bodies must measure the learning **results** of boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities.

4   International and multilateral bodies must promote the **collection** of data from boys, girls and adolescents with disabilities excluded from education and those who participate in different modalities. This is a pending matter since what is not measured cannot be seen and, as a consequence, is not considered as an important matter.

Families

Families, from their role as natural advocates for their daughters' and sons' rights and co-responsible for their education, are fundamental to ensure their children receive inclusive quality education. They have knowledge of their sons and daughters that can be very valuable for the system.

1   Families and people with disabilities, including boys, girls and adolescents must participate in discussions about their education as a right, but they need **support** to do so.

For that reason, this should be incorporated in the legislation or in the local system of the school administration.

2   Families and people with disabilities must participate in all training sessions of critical actors performed by the government.

3   Families and the community can take on active leadership to encourage inclusive education.

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4 Families can be a resource for the community, they can contribute through their experiences and telling how they have overcome their challenges, they can support other families, as well as they can bring this issue to the community agenda turning in this way into an important premise of links for the development of Inclusive Education.

"We must listen to our children, we do not hear our children, teachers do not hear our children; these are the main barriers in the school dynamics. Barriers are not only from schools, we are barriers too." (Parents group, Colombia)

"I believe that one of the biggest barriers to education is not recognizing our children's abilities while acknowledging their disabilities. My daughter has been promoted, but, what are our children sharing at school? Are they really learning values?" (Parents group, Colombia)

"To our society our children are not perfect, they are a mistake, a sin and you say that inclusion is a trending topic but, have we really changed? Deep at the bottom of this culture we are told that we must be perfect, otherwise, we are wrong". (Parents group, Colombia)

"As parents we must be present in the working groups where inclusion is being discussed". (Parents group, Colombia)

☑ Chapter 6. Conclusions

Each participant organization implemented alliances with other organizations and groups in accordance with the collaborative work strategy being developed in its institutional dynamics.

That is how through the study we found the participation of Colombia **UNICEF**, educational institutions that are involved in certain projects developed by the allied organizations, the participation of organizations that are part of the network encouraging the partner organization of Inclusion International and coalitions from the partnership among the many alliances.

Regarding the initiative and its strategies, we highlight the following:

- Consultations with boys, girls and adolescents made it possible to know their experiences and offered lessons for the study on the implications and the value of working with them as main actors. The study shows the contributions that developing innovation for and with childhood has, through a more proactive perspective of such actors.

  As new allies, girls, boys and adolescents identified aspects that might be improved at a micro level in the classroom, where they can be the ones to monitor the obstacles that their classmates with disabilities are facing.

  Solidarity together with advocacy actions strengthens them as citizens and can be a great contribution to the mobilization towards inclusive education with quality and equity for all.

- Working with families and people with disabilities other than intellectual ones allowed identifying information from various reference sources and assessing their contributions, where many pointed out the importance of understanding that, for example, deaf people's barriers are not significantly different from the barriers of those with an intellectual disability.

  "I was delighted to know about their life experience, sometimes we focus on our own disability -I´m a blind person-, I do not know about their matter, but I understand that all of us have the same problems despite having different disabilities. Sharing such experiences helps us become more empowered and I think it is a good thing, and because the laws do not say "hearing disability" but "disability", we are all included… All of us can achieve things. (Nicol, mother of Sonia, a young girl of 23 years old with hearing impairment – Bogota, Colombia)

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- The material developed and the experience from the initiative for all participant organizations are inputs for their work, promoting actions that contribute to the strengthening of Inclusive Education, in a tangible way. Likewise, they contribute to the mobilization of the public opinion to promote local and national changes in policies and/or strategies.

- The publication of this report "**OUR OPINION MATTERS: The perspective of boys, girls and adolescents on the discrimination and barriers to Inclusive Education**" offers important input for the work in the region, identifying new challenges and opportunities to advance the inclusive education agenda.

- The contribution of the investigative process to strengthen the institutional technical knowledge based on the exchange and knowledge transfer between organizations as a joint development of new resources is an example of accomplished team work.

- The alliances created new relationships under a shared interest that can support the development of a critical mass of actors that shares the ideals of inclusive education and has the know-how to make a change.

Following the work carried out by the focal group in the city of Cali, it was proposed with the organization Familia Down and the families that use the services of the library at Comfandi, the creation of a knowledge network that would allow sharing inform ation on inclusive education as participants considered it important to know about advances, policies and other issues that would provide them, as families, with the tools to face the educational processes of their sons and daughters with disabilities.

Today, we have a group of 45 members called "CAPI Program (ACIE Attention Center for Inclusive Education)". Every Thursday a subject is proposed to be discussed with ideas and opinions via WhatsApp, and then they meet monthly at Comfandi, Cali. (Tes timony from Colombia).

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For II and its members in the region, the need to generate alliances during this initiative brought additional value to the consultation. These alliances together with other institutions and organizations and several actors, not only generated important information but also opened the possibility for new spaces and new work links between them, contributing to institutional development and strengthening.

For II, this initiative is an example of the possibilities of the simple structure of Catalyst for Inclusive Education and shows the activities of the implementation of actions mentioned in the strategic plan of II: advocacy; network development and exchange of experiences and knowledge between members of II, all of them put into practice.

The greatest value of the initiative of consultation with girls, boys and adolescents with and without disabilities was the use of supporting strategies in strengthening of partners and local actors' capacities to promote Change.

Mentors with knowledge in inclusive education as framed in the GC4 and in the context of the countries of the region; **consultation** structures; **capacity-building** - strategies within the allies and **team-based problem solving** allowed the generation of a participative model and knowledge-creation in the subject of inclusive education of members of partnerships.

All this as a lesson learnt for others allows building sustainable and scalable processes in other countries and in the region.

As an advocacy strategy for inclusive education in the region it is proposed: to identify mentors with knowledge, identify alliances within partnerships and include the work with boys, girls and adolescents.

> *"Inclusion does not mean that those with visual abilities are over there, those that can read are over here and those who cannot understand are somewhere else. No, inclusion means that we are all here and we all learn, we have different ways to understand and learn, some of us need specific adjustments" (Private School from Bogotá. Ages 8-20).*

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Notes

Glossary

1. See A/HRC/25/29 y Corr.1, párr. 4, and UNICEF. United Nation Children's Fund (2012).

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2. N.B. Education (2009).
1. In this document, regular schools and classrooms are those where students without disabilities attend; sometimes they are also called common schools and classrooms.
3. https://www.catalystforeducation.com/

Introduction

1. In this document, regular schools and classrooms are those where students without disabilities attend; sometimes they are also called common schools and classrooms.
2. https://www.catalystforeducation.com/

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1. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248526
2. ibidem
3. GEM Report summary on disabilities and education - UNESCO Digital Library
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5. United Nations- Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016).
6. http://repositoriocdpd.net:8080/handle/123456789/1865
7. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld
8. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245656_spa
9. Concept note distributed to a civil partnership
10. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 13 (1999) on the Right to Education.
11. http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_S.PDF
12. http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/reshaping-cultural-policies-2018-en.pdf

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13. Extract from the SPSD report for the initiative

14. Concept note for the 2020 GEM Report

15. GC4

16. Concept note by Paula Hunt, Member of Global Team Catalyst for Inclusive Education 2018 on General Comment No.4 CRPD Committee - (2016) on the Right to Inclusive Education.

17. . Accessibility benefits groups of the population and is based on a set of standards that are implemented gradually. Reasonable accommodation relates to an individual and is complementary to the accessibility duty. Modes and means of teaching should be accessible and teaching should be conducted in accessible environments.

18. UNITED NATIONS- CRPD Committee- General Comment No.4 (2016) on the Right to Inclusive Education. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. General Distr. Briefing by Paula Frederica Hunt, 2018.

19. Ibidem

20. Ibidem

21. Personal Contribution of Gordon Porter, Member of Experts' Team Catalyst for Inclusive Education.

22. GEM Report summary on disabilities and education - UNESCO Digital Library

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29. Parekh, Gillian (2013)

30. Hehir, T, and all. (2016).

31. Parekh, G., & Underwood, K. (2015).

32. Porter, G. and AuCoin, A. (2012)

33. http://www.undp.org/content/undp/es/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-4-quality-education.html

34. GEM Report summary on disabilities and education - UNESCO Digital Library

35. RREI Staff Report

36. http://inclusion-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/Mejor-Educacion-para-Todos_Un-Informe-Mundial_Octubre-2009.pdf

37. ibidem

38. https://www.desclab.com/educacion-inclusiva

39. Silvia Bersanelli provides details in the OAS and RREI webinars. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-HY18Yzo_g&t=339s

40. Ibidem

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41. https://rededucacioninclusiva.org/
42. To be published
43. Article 24 Group Report, Argentina
44. Public Consultation Report –Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Lima, June 22, 2018
45. https://www.catalystforeducation.com/
46. Extract from the SPSD report for the initiative
47. María Covadonga Fentanes, Member of the Regional Team of Catalyst for Inclusive Education
48. United Nations (UN)- Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016).
49. https://www.desclab.com/educacion-inclusiva
50. DescLab https://www.desclab.com/educacion-inclusiva - Extract from the Ministry of Education, Integrated Registration System (SIMAT) report, consolidated in 2016.
51. Extract from the **ASDOWN COLOMBIA** report for the initiative.
52. http://www.saraki.org/materiales/documentos/9
53. ibidem
54. Extract from the **FUNDACIÓN SARAKI** report for the initiative.

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	Colegio Filadelfia para Sordos	Bogotá
	Comfandi	Cali
	Corporación Down sin fronteras	Bucaramanga
	Familia Down de Cali	Cali
	Fundación Humanos Down	Bucaramanga
	Fundown Caribe	Santa Marta
	INSOR	Bogotá
	Escuela Precoz Glen Doman	Bucaramanga
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Perspective of boys, girls and adolescents on
discrimination and barriers to Inclusive Education

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Inclusion international ✓ **2021** **OUR OPINION MATTERS**
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Annex 2 – Survey Form of Country Profile on Education

THE COUNTRY PROFILE is created as a check list to build the information of the countries in relation to the education of their school- age children with disabilities.

This check list is designed for the partnership's members who wish to prepare an analysis on the education in their countries from the perspective and implications of inclusive education. The questionnaire was prepared from the perspective of:

- Inclusive Education as a Human Right

- Inclusive Education as the best educational option for People with Disabilities and for All

- Ways of exclusion from Education through access/ enrollment, rules and legislation, beliefs and attitudes, end of primary schools, repetition, graduation, assessment…

- Equity related to Social Justice and Inclusion

- Quality of Education and Results

The verification guide consists of eight sections:

- Education as a Human Right

- Right to Inclusive Education

- Political and Legislative Structure

- Situational Analysis

- Practices of the System

- School Practices

- Quality of Education

- Partnerships

Link to Survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3TNC5WF