



Organization of  
American States

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## **STATISTICS AND EDUCATION POLICIES RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD TRANSITIONS**

Studies from Colombia, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and Brazil

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Organization of American States (OAS)  
Office of Education and Culture  
Bernard van Leer Foundation**

“Trends in transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities” project

Organization of American States (OAS) Executive Secretariat for Comprehensive Development (SEDI), Department of Human Development, Education and Culture, Office of Education and Culture (OAS/OEC). Bernard van Leer Foundation.

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Background of the Study, within the  
**"TRENDS IN TRANSITION POLICIES IN INDIGENOUS, RURAL  
AND BORDER COMMUNITIES" Project**

This study was conducted in response to the general objective of the project proposed to support Member States in their efforts to develop and strengthen policies and strategies that contribute to expanding and improving the quality and coverage of care and education for children between the ages of zero and eight, to facilitate their transition from the home to school programs.

**The purpose of this study was focused on:** a) Collecting and consolidating existing information on trends in care and education in the early years with a special emphasis on rural, indigenous and border settings; b) Identifying and organizing a process of cross-sectoral analysis and evaluation of regional policy and trends in education and transitions during the first years of the child's life; c) Building institutional capacity for policy makers and national and local supervisors of early childhood/preschool and primary education in rural, indigenous and border communities; d) Furthering transition issues and developing specific measures of social communication, advocacy and outreach; e) Providing other countries with the study's methodology and specific publications on reality-based findings identified in indigenous, rural and border communities; f) Acquiring new theoretical and practical elements; g) Assessing the status of early childhood, preschool and basic education; h) Collecting lessons and challenges for the design, implementation, execution and evaluation of policies (early childhood education through the first two grades of primary school) in the hemisphere.

**Stages and phases of the study:**

- 1<sup>st</sup>. Analysis of statistics on specific topics in childcare focused on rural, indigenous and border communities. **(Findings are published in Book I)**
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. Policy meta-analysis, which evaluated the international and national policies on children under the age of eight, from various sectors (health, education, family, work, social security) related to the theme of transitions and focused on rural, indigenous and border communities. **(Findings published in Book I)**
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. Empirical analysis: case studies: **(results published in Book II)**  
The national coordinators selected a community in each country to fully learn about the transition processes of children between the ages of zero and eight in rural, indigenous and border areas, and the educational experiences offered at the locations where they live.

**Phases: Linking Countries to the Study**

The process had two phases. In the first, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela were associated, and their research teams advanced the aforementioned Stages 1, 2 and 3.

From this initial phase, there are two publications: **the first (this one)** collects reports from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela on Statistics and Policies. The second collects the

reports of these countries' case studies, with the exception of Brazil.

While the countries involved in the first phase advanced on the Case Studies, new countries joined and began stages 1 and 2: Mexico, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. To date, Mexico is completing its Case Study. This publication corresponds to the First Phase of the statistical analysis and policy meta-analysis to review the existence of policies, strategies and actions for early childhood transitions in indigenous, rural and border communities.

## Foreword

Since 2007, the Office of Education and Culture (OEC) of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) have been supporting a research project on *"Trends in transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities,"* as part of an Americas-wide program on *"Policies and strategies for a successful transition of children towards socialization and school."*

The policy trends project was designed to shed new light on transition issues and to develop specific approaches for social communication, advocacy and dissemination, and to make available to other countries the study methodology and the specific publications on findings with respect to indigenous, rural and border communities in Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Chile.

In the context of its policies and programs, the Organization of American States, through the Office of Education and Culture (OEC), consulted government and civil society specialists in December 2005, and again in March 2006. Responses were received from 25 of the 34 Member States, expressing the need for more information and sharing successful experiments in two specific areas: the provision of comprehensive services to children from birth through the age of three, and transitions between the different levels of education.

When the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) offered the opportunity to submit projects and compete for funding through the Education Sub-fund, the OEC explored this with the Governments of Venezuela and Barbados. In July 2006, after completing the required evaluations, the CIE recommended the approval of the *"Policies and Strategies for a Successful Transition of Children towards Socialization and School"* project for a two-year period, and simultaneously recommended including initiatives from other agencies and international institutions.

The project's general objective is to "complement the efforts of Member States to develop, strengthen, and evaluate policies and strategies that help extend and improve the quality, equity, and coverage of education and child care for children from birth through the age of six, so as to facilitate their successful transition from the home to preschool programs, and from preschool to primary education."

The project was designed to ascertain progress in the countries and sub-regions; to offer training in theory and practice; to evaluate the status of early childhood, preschool, and primary education; and to identify lessons and challenges in the design, implementation, execution, and evaluation of policies (in early childhood education through the first two grades of primary school) in the Hemisphere. The project has included several activities that are expected to help strengthen the institutional capacity of the participating entities (national and civil society), improve the quality of service, and expand coverage equitably.

It was agreed to construct a working methodology that could be used by other countries to promote and implement transition policies. Over the last two years there have been a number of

meetings, some of them to define the parameters of the study itself, and others to share progress to date.<sup>1</sup>

The investigation's general objective was defined as follows: To identify and describe the critical points in the process of transition between the family and school for children growing up in rural, indigenous and border communities. Based on that description, the project seeks to identify policies and instruments to change behavior among the key players in the process: the child, the family and the teacher.

The study was divided into three parts: the first addressed statistics in the various countries on specific issues relating to child care, with a special focus on rural, indigenous and border communities; the second involved a review of national policies on transition in rural, indigenous and border communities; while the third consisted of a series of case studies in each country to gain a clearer understanding of transitions in this vulnerable population group.

This document presents the results of the five participating countries' research in the first two topics: statistics and policies. Those countries are Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela.

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<sup>1</sup> Washington DC, May 14-18, 2007; Santiago, Chile, June 20-23, 2007; Washington DC, December 10-12, 2007; Lima, July 31 to August 2, 2008; Washington DC, February 10 and 11, 2009; Santiago, Chile, May 25-29, 2009.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Chapter I. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS**

In order to establish a common ground for the interpretation of the information provided, the authors agreed on a series of basic conceptual definitions. The paper examines what is meant by transitions, explains the nine categories identified to group the transition studies and summarizes the most important aspects to be considered when addressing this issue.

Transitions **are defined** as "critical moments of change that children live when moving from one environment to another opening opportunities for human development and learning for life and school."

The following provides a brief overview of the key conclusions reached by and for each country participating in the study.

### **Chapter II. COLOMBIA REPORT**

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of National Statistics on Children in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities**

The paper addresses the transitions from the perspective of education, analyzing the situation of children in Colombia, poverty rates and their impact on vulnerable communities. Similarly, they assess nutrition and health as factors linked to success in school and child development.

According to a census conducted in 2005, nearly half of the population in Colombia are children and young people, one quarter are children under six years, three quarters are distributed in rural areas (including indigenous and border communities where they have greater poverty) and just over half the population consists of women. In rural areas, the most critical factor affecting the population, and thus children, is the armed conflict that causes population displacement, jobs abandonment or forced linkage to the conflict. In indigenous areas, which also include the Afro-Colombian population, this situation is the same, causing displacement and lost opportunities in terms of education (average schooling years, registration, etc.). More than half of indigenous children under the age of six live in rural areas, while Afro-Colombians are more concentrated in urban areas. The poor territorial definition of border communities, composed mostly of indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, hamper the possibility of an accurate census.

For these authors, the main factors to be taken into account in the analysis of educational transition processes include poverty, maternal, neonatal and infant mortality, and child nutrition. It also explores birth registration, child labor, violence and abuse, family structure and household size.

Although there is a statistic reduction at a national level of factors such as grade retention and school dropout, this does not hold true for vulnerable rural, indigenous and border communities. The rates in these areas are higher than in the rest of the country. The same phenomenon is observed when analyzing the quality of education and learning achievement: vulnerable populations always have lower profits and lower performance when compared to children in urban areas.

### **Conclusions**

In Colombia, there are still inequities regarding economic resources and state support provided to rural, indigenous and border areas. This makes successful educational transitions difficult



to achieve. There is still a sub-record in terms of the indexes of health and education of children under the age of eight in rural, indigenous and border areas.

Despite the decline in mortality rates at the general population level, there are still high morbidity and mortality rates for mothers and children under the age of five. The provision of preschool education remains very poor in rural, indigenous and border communities, which are the most needed in the field of health, nutrition and cognitive development.

Adult literacy is low. It is important that significant adults in early childhood have the training and necessary information to provide quality care to children under the age of five in rural, indigenous and border communities.

### **Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies Relating to Transitions**

The study examines Colombia's early childhood policies and the vision of transitions through these policies. It makes a comparative analysis of the different views of quality, equity and coverage and the role of legislative bodies in the implementation of these policies and intersectoral coordination.

Intersectoral cooperation has been achieved through being involved in the formulation of Public Policy on Early Childhood in Colombia, including the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), the Ministry of Social Protection, the Ministry of National Education, the National Planning Department, the Social Welfare Administrative Department of Bogotá, national and international NGOs, academics and international agencies.

The document analyzes the processes of monitoring and evaluation in the implementation and monitoring of policies, training of specialized agents with a supra-sectoral approach, family involvement as the cornerstone of child development and the design and implementation of the curricular plan based on the characteristics and potential of the child.

Finally, it explores the promotion and implementation of services and programs for early childhood. The ICBF, the Administrative Department of the Capital District Social Welfare (DABS), the Family Compensation, CINDE, among others, provide a set of programs for children in vulnerable situations.

### **Conclusions**

Thanks to the discussions held on the legislation for early childhood and the active participation of civil society and academia, Colombia has a National Policy for Early Childhood, which has contributed to the work of the Ministry of Education to implement the Policy for Early Childhood Education.

The process of articulating preschool to basic primary school is included as a policy component within the current legislation. The transition from the home to early childhood education is not addressed in a comprehensive manner and the mechanisms or resources that accompany school transitions are not identified.

Although there are guidelines in the legislation for the attention of rural, indigenous and border communities, early childhood is not directly addressed, educational transitions are not mentioned, and the necessary resources to ensure coverage and quality in early education in these populations are not allocated.

### **Chapter III. CHILE REPORT**

#### **Analysis and Interpretation of National Statistics on Children in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities**

The project was the responsibility of the National Board Early Childhood Education (JUNJI) and the document was developed by staff from the Ministry of Education, the Integra Foundation and the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation. The Department of Health Statistics and Information, the Ministry of Health and the National Indigenous Development Corporation provided information.

Just over half of Chile's population are women and 36% of national households have children under the age of nine. In Chile, there is a marked decrease in the birth rate: from 27.4 in 1972 to 14.9 in 2005, and in the infant mortality rate: from 72.7 to 7.9. Since 1970 there has been an increase in the proportion of adults 60 years and older, and in the segment of 15-59 year-olds, but the younger population (from birth to age 14) has decreased instead. The rural population accounts for 13% (with more men than women) of the total population and has been declining since 1970 (24%). The indigenous population represents 4.6% of the total population, and 14.6% of them are children under the age of nine. Around 62.8% of the indigenous population lives in urban areas, and 15.6% of the rural indigenous population is under the age of nine.

The national total population younger than nine living in poverty is 21%, and 5% live in extreme poverty. This paper addresses factors related to poverty, paid work, household characteristics (national, indigenous and rural), household head (increasing female-headed homes), education, and use and management of the native language. Education is evaluated in terms of a description of the service provided (with a predominance of single-teacher schools in rural areas), the rates in education (age of entry, increased coverage, enrollment and attendance, education and literacy, learning achievement).

Finally, it explores the history of educational agents reviewing the proportion of educational agents per children. There are regulations that establish the ratio of the appropriate number of children per adult.

#### **Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies Relating to Transitions**

The paper reviews public policies in education for children under the age of nine from the perspective of various stakeholders involved: family, community and educators. A legal characterization of indigenous peoples is performed, indigenous and rural are defined, and an assessment of the public agenda in indigenous affairs and the legal, policy and curriculum framework for early childhood education is made.

The document revises public structures involved, listing public policy decisions since 1990: "Goals and lines of action for children. Commitments to Chilean children for the decade," in 1992, then the "National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2001-2010," and "Chile Grows with You" in 2006.

The two major public policies for the care of families and children for the most vulnerable sectors of Chile are "Chile Solidario" and "Chile Grows with You." The first corresponds to a Social Protection System, and the second to an Early Childhood Comprehensive Protection System, which supports children from conception through the age of four.

An analysis of the institutional structure and early childhood education programs in the public sector, service coverage and budgetary framework is provided. The paper also reflects on aspects of

quality education with emphasis on indigenous education, targeting criteria and benefits offered. A summary of the programs and modalities of early childhood care and education for indigenous and rural populations developed by the Ministry of Education, JUNJI and INTEGRA Foundation is provided. The document reviews the implementation of the intercultural curriculum in early childhood education, examines family involvement and inter-sectoral coordination, and vocational education teachers who work with children under the age of nine that live in rural and indigenous communities.

### **Elements of reflection and pending tasks**

The Central Government intends to support processes of educational transition (family, education system), including the positioning, respect and visibility of the indigenous communities and their culture. There is an improved coverage, but the urban environment is still better than the rural one. The aim is to continue improving the quality of educational provision for rural and indigenous communities.

Even though there is a joint program between initial and basic education, other programs need to articulate the knowledge and indigenous cultural content from nursery education to basic education in order to strengthen this link from the same educational system. The issue of language is more complex, and more systematic efforts are needed to make it a continuum from preschool to primary school, which also requires a larger budget and implementation by the State.

It is important to empower families to support the transition process, particularly in the indigenous areas, and find joint strategies between the supply of national public policy and the comprehensive work for children, their families and communities.

To ensure the quality and effectiveness of non-conventional programs, it is necessary to establish basic training requirements: monitoring, supervision, evaluation, and homogenizing the quality of learning and achieving objectives. It is also important to broaden the perspective of intercultural bilingual education to all early education programs and encourage from the Ministry of Education tasks that would allow to: stimulate bilingual teacher training, development of teaching materials adapted linguistically, distribution of textbooks contextualized and conduct a study on best practices for IBE Original Schools.

The main challenge for early childhood education is to open new Intercultural Centers and develop an Intercultural Curriculum for Preschool Education.

## **Chapter IV. PERU REPORT**

### **Analysis and Interpretation of National Statistics on Children in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities**

The document defines *rural population* as "those areas with no more than 100 homes contiguously-located, nor are district capitals, or that having more than 100 homes, they are scattered or dispersed without forming blocks or cores." The *indigenous population* is defined as "those who descended from populations that inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest, while it was a colony, or during the establishment of present state boundaries, and who regardless of their legal status retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions or part of them."

There is no adequate statistical record to register separately the indigenous population; therefore, in the paper they are reported as part of the rural population. According to the 2005 census, the rural population accounted for 26% of the total population of Peru. There are no adequate statistics disaggregated for the children between the ages of zero and eight.

The study presents an overview of the various scenarios that might influence children's educational transitions and girls from rural, indigenous and border areas: availability of resources and capabilities to accompany educational transitions (parents' education level) and to ensure survival, welfare and child development.

It analyzes educational services in rural areas: in 2006 the enrollment of children in the zero-to-five age range was nearly 39% and coverage was nearly 97%. Educational coverage for children under the age of three is minimal: 4% nationally, and 1.6% in rural areas. In the case of children between the ages of three and five, the overall coverage is 44.8%, with a gap of 20 percentage points in urban areas. According to the 1993 census, only 10.46% of children between five and eight years attended an educational service.

It is necessary to review the characteristics of programs for rural children, the capacities of teachers to accompany learning processes, availability of adequate resources (bilingual teachers who do not work in bilingual schools), and their impact on educational transitions regarding children's entry, permanence and progress. Finally, the achievements of rural children in relation to early childhood education are examined.

## **Conclusions**

It is necessary to refine the mechanisms and instruments for registration of rural, indigenous, three-and-under populations. The effectiveness of early education decreases as poverty deepens.

The family is a key space for the development of children living in poverty since it may help reduce mortality, increase child survival and improve attitudes and behaviors. Still, no improvements were found in the nutrition of pregnant mothers, creating risks on them and their babies in uterus. The low level of education and families' income has a negative effect on their ability to accompany the educational process of their children. Domestic violence also acts as a hindering factor for socio-emotional development and child safety.

Some indications point to the low quality of education in rural and indigenous areas:

- Schools in rural areas have fewer services, materials and good teachers.
- Five-year-old children are enrolled very early in first primary grades, contributing to higher repetition and dropout rates, since they are not ready to meet the planned learning for this study cycle. There are great differences unfavorable to schools in rural areas (9%), appearing more frequently in public schools (7.7), multigrade schools (10.8) and single-teacher schools (13.2).
- The results of the 2004 evaluation revealed that only 15% achieved the expected skills of reading comprehension and 9.6% in mathematics, nationwide. This is aggravated in rural areas, where only 2.5% achieve skills in reading comprehension and 2.4% in mathematics.

To reverse the current situation requires political will to expand health care coverage at the initial level to allow for continuity in the system with emphasis on equity and quality of education services and enhanced teacher preparation. The problem of children at risk is a national one that concerns us all, not only their families.

## **Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies Relating to Transitions**

The study analyzes the quality and equity of education in Peru, and how these elements are handled in public policy education. It reviews government's goals and commitments, the

coordination between the different educational levels and policy guidelines; and educational policies in the transition process, participation as a coordination mechanism, bilingual intercultural education and inter-sectorality. Finally, the document analyzes public policies conducive to the development of children and reviews the programs for children: from zero to two years, three to five, and six to eight.

## **Conclusions**

Quality and equity in education are two important pillars for the coordination between the policy priorities established by the Education sector in the Pesem 2007 – 2011, and the 2021 National Educational Project.

In terms of educational coverage, Pesem establishes a 16% increase to the initial level, aiming at achieving 73.7% coverage. This indicator does not specify targets in detail by age group (children under the age of three are the least attended) or geographic area (children in rural and indigenous areas are least likely to have educational services). The Ministry of Education has projected that by the year 2011, a 48% increase in the budget per pupil of the initial level (US\$ 224 to US\$ 437.5 per child) will be achieved. For the population in the three-to-five year age range living in rural areas, the Ministry of Education establishes an increase of 7.23% (0.11% to 7.34%) of children served in programs IBE.

Coordination as external mechanism that contributes to the processes of transition between educational levels, is widely recognized within the system. Having an integrated and diversified national curricular design does not guarantee the occurrence of efficient processes of coordination between levels. To fulfill the mandates of education policy requires efficient management of the education system, enabling participation, and efficient use of available resources, intersectoral action and training of a committed team. Although all policy documents mention the need for early childhood education intersectoral action, there are gaps that hinder cross-cutting initiatives.

At present, and in the country's current situation, the action of organized civil society plays an important role in the incorporation of childhood issues (in rural areas) on the public agenda of local governments. However, there is still a need to improve mechanisms of coordination and communication among the initiatives of civil society and government bodies to ensure complementarity of actions and optimize use of available resources. Peru has favorable policies for early childhood, especially for those living in rural and indigenous contexts, and to promote successful transition process, but must improve the functioning of the mechanisms and ways to implement them.

## **Chapter V. VENEZUELA REPORT**

### **Analysis and Interpretation of National Statistics on Children in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities**

The study is organized around variables of education related to child development in school, and characteristics of the educational agents and the family setting. The described educational variables include the age at school entry, repetition, and desertion, among other things.

According to the 2001 national census, 2.2% of the population in Venezuela (a quarter of a million) is recognized as indigenous. Around 96.2% are in nine of the 23 federal entities, away from the centers where communications and services are concentrated and therefore the most needed. About 34% of the indigenous people live in rural areas. Repetition in basic education has declined over the past three years, although it is still highest in the 1st and 7th grades.

Early childhood education focuses on the ages between four and six (85% of care), while only 21% of the zero-to-three population receives specialized care. About 94% of basic school children

between the ages of seven and eight are cared for, 91.9% between five and six are attended, but care for children from zero to three remains stagnated.

About 99% of enrollment at the preschool level is publicly owned. Indigenous communities of difficult access are dominated by religious missions as service providers to children. Around 40% of indigenous peoples have lost their native language—60% speak theirs—a situation related to the proximity of indigenous peoples to urban areas.

The State is making efforts to strengthen and revitalize languages and cultures, but the Castilian influence and domination prevails. The study reviews the level of teacher training in early education, teacher's working conditions and years of work experience. It presents a characterization of the rural and indigenous families, in their organization, educational level and socioeconomic status.

Finally, there is a brief reflection on the evolution of the Human Development Index (HDI) in Venezuela, showing that Venezuela went from medium-high to high human development.

### **Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies Relating to Transitions**

The study reviews transition policies, mechanisms and/or programs, and analyzes early childhood policies and how transitions are conceptualized in these policies, including addressing aspects such as quality, equity and coverage. Legislative bodies nationally and internationally involved in the transition policies are assessed, separately analyzing the political forces involved.

The paper also reviews the mechanisms and legal elements that secure the rights of minorities (indigenous and child population). It analyzes the advances and limitations in public policy and transition programs for children from zero to eight years, the policy emphasis on equity, ethnicity and location, promotion and implementation of programs, and services and the monitoring of these public policies. It also explores the processes and targeting criteria, work and family involvement, adult education, material support, follow-up, and monitoring and financing of services (Mercal Mission, Mothers of the Barrio Mission, Mother Project, Barrio Adentro Mission, Vuelvan Caras Mission, Guaicaipuro Mission).

A review of the school curriculum, the implementation plan, teacher training, follow-up and monitoring and financing of services is presented. The review looks at the intersectoral coordination, the impact of research in transitions policy and evaluates the development of policies related to transitions.

### **Final Thoughts**

Much remains to be done on the processes of educational transition. Venezuela has made progress in legislation, legitimacy of leadership and empowerment of the indigenous population, but the challenge of coverage in early schooling and the creation of appropriate conditions to tune the patterns of parenting and home schooling (Westernized) remain. There is no improvement in school continuation rates, probably due to the precarious conditions in which public schools operate in Venezuela.

There is a positive legislation and also governance mechanisms that strengthen the presence of indigenous traits in the country, but there is a lack of accompaniment of specific programs to help the communities become less dependent in the political decisions of each government. The Decree and Project "Renewing Basic, Rural and Border School" presents a set of proposals to solve many of the weaknesses of the rural and border environment. It is important to create an indigenous-friendly model school, suitable to the ethnic, rural and border populations' conditions that define a long-range policy for inclusive schooling.

## **Chapter VI. BRAZIL REPORT**

### **Analysis and Interpretation of National Statistics on Indigenous and Rural Children.**

#### **Statistical Analysis of Public Policies in Education in Rural and Indigenous Communities in Brazil**

The document presents an overview of the socio-demographic profile of indigenous and rural populations. In the 1991 census, through a process of "self-identification," the indigenous population of Brazil was at 0.2%; in year 2000, 0.4% of the total population was self-declared indigenous. This increase is not necessarily related to population growth, but rather to the decision of the citizens to declare (or not declare) themselves as indigenous.

The average age of the indigenous population is 23.2 years, in urban areas it is 30.1, and in rural areas it is 16.8 years. Rural children between zero and three years of age are nearly double those between the ages of four and five.

Education indicators are also reviewed: existing statistics on indigenous schooling, taking into account socio-cultural diversity, the characteristics of indigenous schools, and feedback from the school census in terms of number of indigenous schools, number of teachers, level of training, and school enrollment. According to Presidential Decree 26/91, in coordination with the secretariats of state and municipal education, the Ministry of Education has implemented a national policy on indigenous schooling. Indigenous teacher education is one of the priorities and the major challenge of this administration, as there is no one national indigenous school model.

Indigenous populations are distributed in 12.5% of the country, but 60% is concentrated in the Legal Amazon region. Over 50% of indigenous peoples are made up of less than 500 people.

In 1999, the National Board of Education instituted the creation of the category of Indigenous school education systems in the country. However, existing schools in the villages have different situations regarding the legal recognition, and it is not known which schools are recognized as indigenous and which are not. To improve this situation, a census was conducted in 2005, which provided an initial overview on the situation of indigenous school education in Brazil. Through this census it was found that 14.6% of teachers working in indigenous schools are in centers and pre-schools, 9.9% did not finish basic education, 64.8% completed secondary education, and 13.2% have university education.

The paper presents an educational and infrastructure characterization of indigenous schools, considering the use of the local language, teaching materials, the school's physical structure (buildings), existing divisions in indigenous schools, and literacy rates.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

The increase in the number of indigenous schools, which rose from 1,392 in 1999 to 2,323 in 2005, and reached a total of 2,422 in 2006, is explained not only by the creation of new schools—which certainly occurred in this period—but also for the regularization of a large number of schools and classrooms that were not previously recognized as indigenous. In many States, the indigenous school category was created as autonomous units within the education system and thereby regularized the status of many schools located in indigenous lands, once considered only as an extension classrooms in other schools.

The Department of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity (SECAD/MEC), along with the secretariats of state and municipal education, the Union of Municipal Education Leaders

(UNDIME) and the National Council of State Secretaries of Education, have sought to expand the supply and quality of school education in indigenous communities (indigenous teacher training, construction, reform and expansion of Indigenous schools, etc.). The General Coordination of Education has spent the past four years in coordination with the General Coordination of Indigenous School Education for teacher training, and has ensured the functioning of countless indigenous teaching courses.

The population growth rate of most indigenous peoples of Brazil is closer to 40% (while the national average is 1.4%). Although there is a tendency to make State schools, in percentage terms, indigenous schools linked to the municipalities account for over half the total, 52.4%. The recognition of schools as indigenous also explains the significant increase in the number of indigenous students that, in five years, increased almost 50%. Between 1999 and 2005, there was an increase in enrollment in kindergarten and in care centers: in 1999 there were 7,584 registrations whereas in 2005, there were 18,114.

Data from the INEP MEC School Census 2006 indicate that the supply of indigenous school education increased by 48.7% in the last four years. These numbers indicate that from 2002, the annual increase in indigenous school tuition is approaching the rate of 10% per year.

Despite the progress made in recent years by indigenous peoples regarding the right to an intercultural education, it still requires much attention in terms of practice in the classroom, training of indigenous teachers, and production of materials, such that schools that are on indigenous lands may offer differentiated quality instruction that values the language and traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples. Censuses indicate that indigenous peoples saw great progress in education indicators over the 1990s, but still are below average regarding general population.

The 2000 census indicates that the indigenous infant mortality (51.4 per thousand live births) was much higher than that of the general Brazilian population (30.1 per thousand). Indigenous infant mortality also presents a geographical distribution different from that observed for the population as a whole, and is higher in those living in urban areas (52.2 per thousand) than in rural areas (47.0 per thousand), quite the contrary of the general population.

**Analysis of Early Childhood Education Policies Relating to Rural  
and Indigenous Communities.  
Public Policies in Education for Rural, Indigenous and Border Communities in Brazil:  
Successes and Challenges**

In this section the study reviews the existing legislation, early childhood education and indigenous school education. For at least 30 years there have been initiatives, decrees and political mobilization aimed at the recognition of rights for indigenous peoples. The Magna Carta assured indigenous peoples the right to use their native languages and their own processes of learning, respect and protection of their values and cultural events. There have been major advances in the field of management of indigenous school education programs in recent years.

The paper analyzes public policies for children's education, inter-sectoral coordination, ethno-educational territories and the Curriculum Implementation Plan. Early Childhood Education Policy is based on different legal documents recognizing children as subjects of law (right holders) and emphasize the role of the state as a duty, through the family. Enrolment in kindergarten is not compulsory, it is the family's decision, but the state is nonetheless obligated to provide the service. There are various bodies (organizations and social movements) that monitor government actions in the area of early childhood.



Lastly, it provides a list of articles and legal guidelines regarding early childhood education, and discusses the role that the Ministry of Education proposes to define a national policy for child education in the field.

## **Chapter VII. CONCLUSIONS**

All of the countries participating in the study showed interest in addressing the issues related to vulnerable populations, specifically in relation to indigenous children in rural and border communities. Although there are clear laws, there is no specific approach on transitions, and therefore a large amount of information, resources and monitoring mechanisms on the transition process cannot be easily specified. "In all countries the coverage of early education services is low and is concentrated in urban areas and high income groups." "Border communities" is not territorially defined and there is no accurate census on this.

Generally speaking, from the analysis of statistics and policies we may conclude that the countries included in this study have made significant progress in providing care for children under the age of six, in reducing dropout and repetition rates in the early years of basic education, and in enhancing the visibility of indigenous groups, among others. Yet progress to date still appears inadequate and early childhood education and care is still failing to reach large numbers of children among the most vulnerable population.

With some differing shades of emphasis, the national governments of all these countries have shown a determination to support education transition processes, and to assist in the experience of transition from family into the education system; in particular with respect to valuing people's original culture, with concern for the positioning and visibility of indigenous communities and their culture in the education field.

The reports highlight the fact that despite having a good legislation, transitions are not detailed; rather they are included as a component referred to the coordination of the passage from pre-school to elementary school from an institutional point of view, without comprehensively addressing the issue of transitions from the home to the educational system. There are no established mechanisms or resources to carry out processes accompanying transitions.

This situation can be reversed, but it will take political will to expand the coverage of early childhood education in ways that will allow continuity in the system while stressing equity and quality in the services offered. Better preparation for teachers, in terms of contents and methodological strategies, would allow them to sequence learning and articulate classes, cycles and educational levels more effectively. Furthermore, we are beginning to understand that the problems of at-risk children are not confined to the private sphere (the family), but are becoming a national problem that engage us all.

In all countries coverage of early education services is low, and is concentrated in urban areas and high income groups. All are far from achieving educational indexes than can break the poverty cycle. It is necessary to encourage government investment in this phase of training.

Children's possibilities of receiving support from their families in rural and indigenous areas are not sufficient to protect them against the effects of poverty. Thus, these children start their schooling in a disadvantaged situation, compared to non-poor children from urban areas, which widens the gap. Schools are not responding to the particular needs of these groups, nor are they comfortable enough to contribute with families in the development of their children.

There is also a need to strengthen strategies within early childhood programs in order to empower families in the support they can provide to the transition process experienced by the preschooler upon entering the basic education system, especially in the indigenous world.

Although all the policy documents on early childhood care and education mention the need for intersectoral action, there are gaps that impede intersectoral initiatives, such as: the lack of standardized basic criteria for the functioning, continuity and complementarity of programs, the lack of mechanisms for integrating information and the impossibility of reconciling the data collected from each sector, which prevents the establishment of priorities and goals. As a result, budgets are frequently "cloned" from year to year, strategies are repeated without any demonstration of their impact, there is no comprehensive overview of operations, and there is inadequate targeting with the attendant leakages (where funds go to those who should not receive them). Additionally, there are attitudinal problems on the part of the programs' final operators. These aspects are part and parcel of the problems of equity and of access to early childhood programs.

To guarantee the quality and effectiveness of non-conventional programs, there are certain basic requirements in terms of training—monitoring, supervision, evaluation etc.—that will serve to standardize the quality of the learning and the objectives to be achieved. Reality shows us that having an integrated and diversified national curricular design is in itself no guarantee of efficient articulation between the levels.

Among the tasks that must be addressed with indigenous groups is that of providing indigenous language instruction in their respective institutions; designing and preparing programs of study and teaching materials suited to the idiosyncrasies of the communities; distributing textbooks adapted to the cultures; initial and continuous training for indigenous teachers at the intermediate level; training for indigenous teachers at the higher education level; political and pedagogical support for teaching systems to expand the availability of schooling in indigenous lands; better diagnostic assessments of education in indigenous communities; and dissemination of indigenous cultures among the rest of the population.

To achieve the mandates of education policy and the targets that the sector has set for itself (in terms of early childhood education and care) will require efficient management of the education system. This implies active participation by the various stakeholder entities, adequate funding for implementing policies, efficiency and transparency in the use of resources, intersectoral action to ensure a comprehensive approach, and a human resources team that is committed and performs its functions at a high level. In general terms, with respect to the coordination process, it would be well to adopt strategies to articulate the different spheres of national public policy for integral attention and work with children, their families and community.

Organized civil society has an important role to play in incorporating early childhood problems (in rural areas) into the agenda of local governments. However, the mechanisms of articulation and communication between initiatives of civil society (NGOs, universities etc.) and government agencies (national, regional and local) need to be improved in order to achieve complementarity and optimize the use of available resources.

With respect to specific aspects we may conclude:

- There is great inequity in these countries, and it affects above all people living in rural, indigenous and border communities.
- The indigenous populations in these countries represent a small proportion of the total (3.43% in Colombia, 4.6% in Chile, 2.2% in Venezuela, and 0.2% in Brazil, while in Peru they are submerged in the statistics for the rural population, which is 26%), yet they bear the heaviest burdens.
- Family poverty means that children are undernourished, their parents devote little time or attention to them, are unaware of adequate stimuli (quality of care), and attach low priority to preschool education, nutritional conditions for pregnant and nursing mothers are inadequate. Furthermore, domestic violence is widespread, and women who are

heads of household are overwhelmed by their responsibilities. In other words, families do not have the resources and the capacity to monitor educational transitions.

- Chile has the best record, not only because it has made a significant dent in poverty indices but also because it has achieved broad coverage in early childhood education and care for the most vulnerable groups, having reduced the illiteracy rate to 3.9% and increased the average length of schooling to ten years. Nonetheless, Chile still has a very inequitable pattern of wealth distribution (and this is true *a fortiori* in the other countries).
- All countries have established policies, programs and activities for early childhood education and care. Yet actions fall far short of policy guidelines and program targets.
- Generally speaking, national statistics on specific aspects (morbidity and mortality, vaccination systems, HIV/AIDS infection, disabilities, malnutrition, civil registry, child labor, mistreatment etc.) do not contain disaggregated data for rural, indigenous and border populations. However, recognizing that marginalization is greatest among these population groups, we may expect that their maternal and child mortality indices are significant.
- Early childhood care and education is better than before, but still insufficient.
- Rural schools are at a disadvantage in comparison with urban schools.
- The highest repetition rates are in basic education, especially in the first three grades.
- The education problem must be given greater visibility, particularly for rural and border populations, and this means refining the mechanisms and instruments for recording information to make sure they cover this population, including children under the age of three.
- Thanks to policies and programs aimed at keeping children in school, dropout rates are declining, but they are still high among the most vulnerable population groups.
- While the provision of preschool services for children three years and older has improved, they are still rare in rural, indigenous and border communities. The poorest and most disadvantaged children in rural and indigenous areas have no access to early childhood education and care programs, and yet these are the groups with the greatest needs in terms of health, nutrition and cognitive development.
- The available indicators show that a high percentage of indigenous groups have lost their native tongue or use it only within the family, and occasionally in closed communities.
- Five-year-olds are being enrolled too early in the first grades of primary school, a factor that contributes to high repetition and dropout rates because their stage of development is not sufficient to master the learning required for this cycle of study.
- Instruction is of low quality and teachers do little monitoring of their students (student performance is poorest in the public schools, and worse yet in rural public schools).
- Education programs need to be made more attractive and more child-friendly.
- Teachers need greater skill in monitoring children's learning and transitions.