



# CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: stories and lessons learned from Latin America and the Caribbean

Initiative:



Campana  
Latinoamericana  
por el Derecho  
a la Educación

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**CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCATING  
FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION:  
stories and lessons learned  
from Latin America and  
the Caribbean**

# Presentation

The Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (*Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación - CLADE*) is a diverse and inclusive network of civil society organizations dedicated to the defense and promotion of public and free education for all. It believes firmly that national governments are responsible for fulfilling the human right to education, thereby responding to the sovereign will of the citizens who elected them. In this context, strengthening civil societies is fundamental, so they can advocate and participate in the definition of key laws and in the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies for education.

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) established the project Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) in 2008 as a means to strengthen the capacity of national education coalitions in low-income countries towards dialogue and advocacy for the effective implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action, as well as promoting comprehensive fulfillment of the right to education for all.

This project has been implemented in 45 countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Between 2009 and 2012 it was supported with resources from the Education Program Development Fund (EPDF), with additional support from AusAID. Bolivia, Haiti, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic are among participating Latin American and Caribbean countries.

In 2009, CLADE, GCE and Ayuda en Acción in Spain established a dialogue with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo - AECID*) to further expand the project in the region. Currently, a total of 14 national education coalitions are implementing the initiative in their respective countries.

This publication has been produced with the objective of disseminating some of these actions and sharing lessons learned from these three years of project implementation. Examples of how a strengthened and networked civil society can make a difference in education policies are found in the pages that follow.

The Bolivian Campaign for the Right to Education (*Campaña Boliviana por el Derecho a la Educación - CBDE*) is one of these examples, which has advocated for a new general education law that breaks down discriminatory practices in the education field. The alliance established between the Reunification Education for All (*Reagrupación Educación para Todos y Todas - REPT*), from Haiti, and CLADE is another example, where it has worked on the regional and international scale to build awareness about the challenges and alarming situation regarding education in this country.

Efforts by the Education and Human Development Forum under the Initiative for Nicaragua (*Foro de Educación y Desarrollo Humano de la Iniciativa por Nicaragua – FEDH-IPN*) are described, highlighting their work that has strengthened national advocacy efforts by collecting information in municipalities from citizens in regards to their demands for education. This publication also shows how the Dominican Socio-educational Forum (*Foro Socioeducativo - FSE*) has worked to monitor the public budget for education in the Dominican Republic.

Finally, several examples are presented describing how the CLADE network has been collectively building linkages towards region-wide advocacy for the Human Right to Education, participating in international spaces and processes. Examples include CLADE participation in the *2009 International Adult Education Conference* and in the *Organization of Ibero-American States' Education Goals for 2021*, as well as the manner in which it integrated advocacy efforts into the *Rio+20 Conference's Working Group on Education*.

We hope that these stories can provide inspiration to civil society organizations, as well as citizens, who are fighting for the consolidation of the right to education around the world.

**Please enjoy this publication!**

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# Bolivia

## The Bolivian Campaign for the Right to Education and the advocacy process for the new General Education Law

The rapid development of events in Bolivia's social and political spheres during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century marked new stage for the country and introduced a reform process for the rationale of engagement between the State and civil society underwent a rebuilding process. In the light of this context, Evo Morales Ayma rose to the presidency in December 2005, as the first indigenous president. He was backed by civil society movements and organisations, which had historically been excluded from political power and State management.

Morales enacted the new Political Constitution of the State in 2009, reestablishing Bolivia as a Plurinational State, and proposing a "Cultural Education Revolution" while acknowledging the vitality of reflecting these changes in the country's education system.

The Bolivian Campaign for Right to Education (*Campaña Boliviana por el Derecho a la Educación* - CBDE) was established within this political atmosphere in November 2009; when it began an active participation and advocacy process, which led to its recognition as an education network. CBDE currently comprises 8 international and 36 national NGOs, 10 grassroots organisations, an alternative education educators network, and several supporters and activists. Through this diverse and broad-based membership, the Campaign bestows a high level of representation and legitimacy with strong capacity for developing policy proposals.

### Collectively building the new Education Act

One of CBDE's main contributions has undoubtedly been advocating for civil society



recommendations gathered through a participatory process to be included in to the Avelino Siñani - Elizardo Pérez (ASEP) Education Act, enacted on 21st December, 2010. The main demand, as stated by V. Beatriz Pérez Sandoval, CBDE coordinator, was that the new education act could covered issues as eradication of violence, depatriarchalisation, food sovereignty, inclusion of sign language, compulsory education through high school pursuant to the provisions of the Political Constitution of the State, and gender equality as a promoter of social equality.

Contributions were prepared collectively through thematic roundtables with dialogue and reflection, resulting in proposals finalised through gradual sensitisation and validation processes. The final proposals were formed into printed documents, representing consensus established among a variety of civil society stakeholders. As part of the advocacy process, these proposals were brought to the attention of education policy decision makers such as the Ministry of Education. Lobbying was also conducted with national representatives of the Plurinational Assembly of Bolivia, in the relevant Senate and House of Representatives committees, who finally have included the demands on the new education act.

“This work responded to an ethical, political-educational resonance and, while at the same time highlighting education as a major area of interest for civil society, demanding a more fluid and intense relationship between branches of government, social organisations and activists promoting citizenship participation in education,” said CBDE coordinator.



Photo: VIAJE A BOLIVIA



Photo: VIAJE A BOLIVIA

Photo: CBDE



Children demand their right to education during a 2012 Global Action Week activity.



Photo: CIAT



Photo: EMILIANO LUCERO



Photo: EMILIANO LUCERO



Photo: LEO PRIETO

Another significant process, which aimed at the complete fulfilment of the right to education, was the preparation of the *Contributions to the Production of Social Community Participation Rules* document, developed by the civil society under the guidelines of the new education policy. This publication gathers experiences, lessons learned, researches, reflections and criticism on social participation as a right and a social, ethical and political process of citizenship building, founded on gender equality.

The Campaign is currently working on the development of proposals related to implementing the Base Curriculum Design for the Plurinational Education System (2012). It has also produced studies and researches on gender and discrimination, education funding, fulfilment of the right to education in Bolivia, and women's educational status.

CBDE is widely accepted in the public sphere, through its role coordination and engaging at State level, and is involved in its affiliates' activities. For example, it has participated in the production of and provided knowledge and proposals for the *Plurinational Plan on Human Rights Education*, promoted by the Ministry of Education, the Office of the Ombudsman and the High Commissioner of the United Nations.

The coalition has also been boosting thematic discussions in different departments, seeking to build a minimum agenda of public education policies. Throughout the development of the CSEF project, it has organised negotiation and policy definition workshops, as well as intercultural dialogues in La Paz and other cities. This work opens the possibility of submitting other proposals to the Plurinational Assembly and to the Executive Power authorities, as well as generating collective knowledge and influencing public opinion, without losing the CBDE's autonomy from the State.



Photo: CBDE



*Representatives from the Bolivian Campaign during a meeting on policy advocacy.*

## Challenges

- To strengthen social participation in other geographical and municipal spheres where initial processes are taking place.
- To place on the public agenda the participatory development, monitoring and evaluation of the national sector plans and policies for education.
- To advocacy towards regulating and implementing the 2010 Education Act, particularly making progress on issues that must be overcome, such as patriarchalisation, gender inequality, exclusion and other forms of discrimination.

## Lessons learned

- Recognising and valuing diversity in a country such as Bolivia is crucial. It is necessary to create spaces where not only diversity is recognised but where the relationship among the actors is based on a horizontal and visible dialogue.
- Maintaining levels of coordination through dialogue and negotiation with government agencies is important, but preserving the autonomy that characterises civil society organisations. In advocacy work, having clear objectives and gauging participation to prevent its instrumentalisation or its submissive attitude is key.
- It is also necessary to be flexible and develop strategies and openness to dialogue with national authorities instead of taking closed positions, since it allows to understanding their rationale, building strong arguments and influencing their decisions.
- Likewise, departmental and municipal echelons must be viewed as spaces for civil society empowerment because they are decision-making bodies for local policies.



# Dominican Republic

## Civil society monitoring of the public budget for education in the Dominican Republic: the Socio-educational Forum experience

In 1997 a new General Education Act came into force in the Dominican Republic, guaranteeing the right to education for all citizens. Its enactment was followed by regulations and the establishment of several bodies with the purpose of ensuring compliance with the Act.

This milestone raised new challenges for civil society actors committed to the right to education: to monitor compliance with the Act, as well as make interventions to improve the reality of education and advocate for increases in the low budget allocations to the sector. Based on these objectives, the Socio-Educational Forum (*Foro Socioeducativo* - FSE) was established in the year 2000; bringing together eight civil society organisations dedicated to education in the Dominican Republic.

From the start, the Forum set out to be a space for reflecting and generating policy proposals. It began its operations with producing of the document *Reflections and Proposals from Civil Society - A Review of the National Education Situation*, featuring contributions from institutions, mothers, fathers and researchers. The paper was presented to the central government.

The Forum has been successful in creating alliances and its proposals have become instrumental in the process of reforming education in the Dominican Republic. The production of the civil society document was important for the history of the coalition and demonstrated its initial vocation to strive for the mobilisation and advocacy to which it has been devoted up to now.

## Monitoring the State Education Budget

Aspiring to involve civil society in the struggle to ensure fair public investment for education, the Forum launched the *Ministry of Education Budget Monitoring Watch* in 2010. The Education Watch is a tool aimed at enhancing transparency and governance of the Ministry of Education spending of public funds for education through strengthening the role of civil society in social audit processes and monitoring of education sectors plans and budgets.

One mechanism for this monitoring exercise is the *Education Watch Bulletin*. Its first edition, released in 2011, analysed several ten-year education plans drawn up between 1992 and 2011, identifying the negative impact of low public investment resulting in an education system of poor quality. The second edition analyzed three education policies comprised in the Ten-Year Education Plan (2008-2018), while the third offered an analysis of the 2011 education budget.

“The Education Watch has made important contributions to the education debate and nurtures education community stakeholders with more objective and evidence-based information. The analyses presented in the bulletins have made an impression in the media and been quoted in several influential spaces,” stated Aida Consuelo Hernández, Socio-Educational Forum coordinator.

The *Education Watch Bulletins* were far-reaching, targeting a wide audience nationally and beyond the country’s borders, including current and former Ministries of Education representatives, international organisations and NGOs, senators, press and television, educators, parents, and other key stakeholders.

Civil society appropriated and disseminated Education Watch data, encouraging public debate on education sector spending and the demand for a budgetary allocation of at least 4% of GDP to education, in accordance with the law in the country. The Education Watch has grasped the attention of authorities to such an extent that the Ministry of Education wrote to the Socio-Educational Forum, acknowledging the quality of the bulletin and putting forth their views.

“We believe, without a doubt, that the research, social observation and monitoring initiatives carried out by civil society organisations on policies that in reality the society itself finances,



Photo: JEFF



Photo: JEFF



are real contributions to the content of the debate on education issues. This also forms a solid foundation for the creation of a critical conscience regarding knowledge of social investment in our country. (...) We would like to congratulate the authors [of the Education Watch] and urge them to continue with such a commendable research initiative,” stated the Ministry of Education in their letter to the Forum.

Along with monitoring the budget through the Education Watch, the Forum was involved more direct battles for increased funding for Dominican public education. For example, the Forum held regional meetings in Santo Domingo, Santiago and Sánchez Ramírez in 2010, and organised social mobilisation. The same year the Socio-Educational Forum joined the Dignified Education Coalition (*Coalición Educación Digna*), a movement advocating for “4% for Education”, which gained the attention of the media, political leaders, and citizens not only from the Dominican Republic but also from many other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

More recently, the Forum joined a new coalition called the *Social and Political Commitment for Education (Compromiso Social y Político por la Educación)*, founded by civil society entities and the business sector, which led to an agreement and a signed commitment from all presidential candidates of the national elections earlier 2012, in favour of investing 4% of the country’s GDP in pre-university education. This entity also promoted televised debates on candidates’ programs for education, in which member institutions of the Socio-Educational Forum played a significant role.

Photo: JOHN WOOD





Photo: JOSÉ SOTO



Photo: JOHN WOOD



“Some effects of this process were the strengthening of public positioning regarding education on the national agenda. For the first time, candidates had to participate in public debates on their plans for education and undergo the scrutiny of experts in education, economics and social sciences in general. The general public was able to listen to the candidates, hear their proposals and consider their quality. These actions are unprecedented milestones in the country,” added the Socio-Educational Forum coordinator.

In general terms, political advocacy and social mobilisation have contributed to increased, more efficient and more transparent use of State resources for education in the Dominican Republic.

### Challenges and lessons learned

- Strengthening of the Socio-Educational Forum’s institutional identity, while respecting each member’s unique characteristics: This challenge is related to ensuring decision-making processes through a collective environment and highlights the need to establish an organisational structure in which to deliberate and make effective strategic and operating decisions, in a collaborative and inclusive manner.
- Enlarging the social base of the coalition and its ability to generate strong and sustained partnerships with other sectors: Even though the Forum has become consolidated as an advocacy space, developing civil society stakeholder mobilisation from within the coalition and improving fundraising capacity by establishing alliances are still in process.



# Nicaragua

## From the local to the national level: establishing municipal educational roundtables

Since its inception 17 years ago, the Forum for Education and Human Development of the Initiative for Nicaragua (*Foro de Educación y Desarrollo Humano de la Iniciativa por Nicaragua* - FEDH-IPN) has been a space for coordination and cooperation among civil society organizations. Subsequently, in December 1995, the coalition gathered around 350 people representatives from civil society, teachers unions, social movements and foundations that began advocating for the human right to education in the country.

Since then, the coalition has been in dialogue with the State of Nicaragua in order to promote civil society participation in the processes of formulating, implementing and evaluating policies and programs that will provide comprehensive and integrated development for national education. In recent years, the Forum agreed on its political agenda and institutionalised its membership, currently totalling 53 members, all involved in the defence and promotion of the right to education.

### Strengthening the local civil society

In recent years, FEDH-IPN has been known for its progress towards creating and strengthening local education roundtables, which are cooperation and decision-making spaces for education at the municipal level. Participation is open to all interested parties, for instance, educators, NGOs, institutions and, at times, representatives from the Ministry of Education and local governments. Coordination is defined democratically from within the group of participants, taking into account the context of each community.



The Forum played a key role in the history and creation of the first education roundtables, which were set up in 2003 in the regions of Ocotal and Estelí, during training courses conducted by the Institute of Education of *Central American University (IEDUCA)* to teachers and human rights activists. Subsequently FEDH-IPN encouraged and accompanied the establishment of these local cooperation and decision-making spaces in other parts of the country.

“Education roundtables provide an opportunity to discuss education policy advocacy. At the time, we felt it was important to influence national decisions, but it was also important to advocate in the communities in which we believe more tangible changes to education can be made. It was also important to work with the roundtables as a strategy to decentralise the issue of education and for local authorities to make a greater commitment to education in their municipalities,” stated FEDH-IPN coordinator Jorge Mendoza.

From 2005 to this day, the Forum has expanded this work, with the establishment of education roundtables in 44 of the 150 municipalities in the country and through the organisation of training workshops, including provision tools for roundtable members to participate in formulating, implementing and evaluating education policies.

These workshops enabled the analysis of the country’s education situation and the coordinated advocacy strategies at national, municipal and local levels, as was the case of the *Ten-Year Education Plan National Workshop* (December 2010) held in Managua with the participation of two delegates per roundtable. They also contributed to disseminate political participation and advocacy techniques. *The Website Workshop* (December 2010), for instance, dealt with managing the FEDH-IPN website as a mechanism to disseminate local actions. *The National Workshop on Advocacy on*



Photo: J. B. HAFNER



Photo: J. B. HAFNER



Photo: J. B. HAFNER



Photo: J. B. HAFNER



Photo: J. B. HAFNER



Photo: FEDH-IPN



*Education Policies* (April 2011) presented tools and strategies for advocacy and for policy design, implementation and monitoring. *The Training Workshop for Municipal Education Diagnosis* (March and May 2011) envisioned the roundtables' influence on national, municipal and local education issues, seeking to contribute to a wider advocacy project regarding the National Education Plan.

These initiatives allowed the FEDH-IPN to focus its attention, between July and December 2011, on updating the national education agenda based on local demands. The Forum materialised this mission by creating the Knowledge Watch, a body that allows for the generation of knowledge and the analysis of educational information to monitor compliance with the right to education in Nicaragua. According to Mendoza, "The Knowledge Watch is located in Managua and the education roundtables are the eyes and ears of the Forum in the municipalities."

The roundtables has also allowed for research initiatives, for example on architectural barriers experienced by children with disabilities when trying to go to school (2012) and on applying intercultural bilingual education in the country (2012). It has also strengthened national FEDH-IPN campaigns for *School Enrolment*, *School Retention and Promotion* and *7% of GDP for basic and secondary education*, in addition to enhancing Global Action Week activities.

"Education roundtables make local campaigns possible. For example, we develop a radio vignette and give it to the roundtables, which are in charge of negotiating with local radios so the message reaches the people. Roundtables are also responsible for distributing materials used in demonstrations and going from house to house inviting families to enrol their children, in the case of the national campaign for school enrolment," stated the Forum coordinator.



By strengthening the capacity of local political advocacy, effective contributions have been made to the management of some municipalities, which have improved commitments to education. Education roundtables in the cities of Telica, Camoapa, La Trinidad and Estelí not only prepared their agenda and posed people's education demands but also managed to have their claims incorporated into the municipal budget. On the Caribbean coast, in the face of the latest municipal elections, several municipalities made a commitment to invest 8% of their municipal budget in education. The educational roundtable of Kukra Hill municipality, in turn, obtained the mayor's commitment to invest in scholarships for students and educators, repairs in classrooms and schools, and payment of transportation so educators can participate in training workshops and other activities.

Lastly, FEDH-IPN's mobilization effort through the media is noteworthy: through meetings for raising awareness on the right to education with journalists from major national newspapers and radio stations, it was possible to secure media coverage on the issue and create a national network of journalists as friends of education.

### Challenges and lessons learned

- One of the main challenges FEDH-IPN's faces in terms of political advocacy and social mobilisation is the national government's closure of spaces for dialogue on various national social issues. In this regard, the Forum continues its efforts to restore dialogue with the Ministry of Education and the national government. As part of this effort, the Forum works to further strengthen dialogue and joint work with other social organisations advocating for education.
- Specifically in the case of educational roundtables, their main challenge is to remain an effective and sustainable platform for civil society participation, regardless of the political and partisan context of each community.
- The municipal and community networking perspective developed by FEDH-IPN was decisive not only for the fulfilment of its objectives and actions, but also for strengthening of the Nicaraguan civil society as a key stakeholder in designing, implementing and monitoring education policy.
- The ongoing dialogue with the media contributed to position FEDH-IPN and the right to education on the national agenda.
- The Forum developed its capacity for administrative and financial management based on the principle of transparency in operations management, and strengthened the culture of accountability, which resulted in greater efficiency of the coalition's actions.



Photo: LIFE SOAP



*Demonstration in solidarity with Haiti during the 2010 Carnival in the Dominican Republic.*

# Haiti

## Haiti is All of Us: an international campaign with Haitian citizenry

In Haiti, more than 500,000 girls and boys of mandatory school age are excluded from the education system and the absolute illiteracy rate is over 50%. It is the only country in Latin America and the Caribbean that does not have a General Education Act and it has one of the highest levels of privatised education in the world – more than 90% of schools are privately owned.

The non-gratuity is a serious obstacle in a country where 76% of people live on less than 2 dollars a day and where the annual family expenditure average with the education for each child is 156 dollars in primary school and 350 dollars in high school. It means that, in order to educate just one child, the breadwinner should spend 21.3% or 47.9% of their annual income, respectively.

Likewise, school infrastructure is often unhealthy and unfit. The number of students in each classroom is extremely high, reaching about 225 students per room in some areas.

The consequences of the earthquake in January 2010 were particularly devastating nationwide—leaving more than 230,000 deceased and thousands injured—and its impact on education was no different. An estimated 38,000 students and more than 1,300 education workers died. The earthquake also destroyed or severely damaged many schools; and the actual building of the Ministry of Education did not survive.

After the earthquake, the country attracted the attention of the media and international organizations, which not only raised funds but also sent aid and staff to the Caribbean



island. Lack of a strong national State meant that international cooperation targeted military intervention rather than humanitarian and social needs, and this trend became increasingly consolidated in the country. Plans for reconstruction of the education system were also used by Haiti's authorities and multilateral financial institutions to further develop privatisation: more is invested in policies supporting private institutions than in building a public education system for all.

In this context, the Reunification Education for All (*Reagrupación Educación para Todos y Todas* - REPT), member of the Latin-American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) in Haiti, which has been fighting for the human right to education for many years, is facing new and complex challenges. While maintaining a key focus on fighting for a free public education system for all, with institutions, laws, structure, appropriate resources, and trained and valued educators in place, the massive presence of the international community in Haiti also demanded an exercise in international advocacy. REPT and CLADE have therefore emphasised ensuring visibility of the actual cooperation and support the Haitian people requires and the principles that guides it, and to reposition the country on the international agenda.

Based on this rationale, CLADE and REPT created the initiative *Haiti is All of Us*: the fight for the human right to education. This initiative seeks to raise awareness of the country's legal and political frameworks on education and the national and international cooperation actions for education that are being implemented in the country. The intention was also to mobilise collective civil society efforts across various countries, in dialogue with Haitian citizens, and pressure the national and international decision-making bodies to fulfil the human right to education in Haiti.

### What do we want?

National, regional and international dialogue has generated important and necessary conceptual contributions toward the construction of a system of free public education in

Photo: REPT



An REPT demonstrator displays a banner demanding public and free education for all.

Photo: REPT



Teacher's Union leader, Josué Merillien, gives an interview during the REPT demonstration for public and free schooling.



Photo: UN PHOTO/LOGAN ABASSI



Photo: HOLLY KATHRYN



Photo: UN PHOTO/PASCAL GORRITZ



Photo: UN PHOTO/MARCO DORMINO



Photo: UN PHOTO

Haiti. They identify the State as guarantor of this right and of the provision of schools in all regions of the country, and all the necessary staff, infrastructure and materials, under the following principles:

- implementation of free public primary education, which is not satisfied by the subsidy to private schools, as suggested by international financial organization projects;
- rejection of increasing privatization of education;
- state funding to ensure fulfilment of the right to education for all people, in all stages and modalities;
- compliance with state obligations regarding working conditions and an appropriate standard of living for educators;
- international cooperation guided towards strengthening, not undermining, the State's ability to meet its obligations regarding human rights;
- emphatic rejection of criminalization of social movements and activists who exercise their legitimate right to freedom of expression.

As part of the raising awareness and visibility strategies, there has been a series of public debates that have impacted directly on the campaign's objectives, within and outside of Haiti, as featured below:

**Human Right to Education in Haiti: Challenges and Horizons Seminar**, held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, from 22 to 24 May, 2012, with the participation of more than 70 delegates from the country and eight international guests: the meeting resulted in the *Manifesto for Free, Public, Quality Education for All in Haiti*, a key document for the diagnosis, principles and proposals for public education in the country, which was forwarded to Haiti's Ministry of Education and to strategic international cooperation bodies, opening doors to dialogue and advocacy.

**Haiti is All of Us - the Fight for the Right to Education Seminar**, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, on 26 January 2012, during the Thematic Social Forum. The World Social Forum is historically a key space for social movements to come together to share experiences of different struggles and discuss realistic strategies towards a new, improved world. This forum provided



an appropriate space to debate education in Haiti, resulting in significant impact. On the one hand the media highlighted the presence and voice of Patrice Florvilus, executive secretary of REPT at the time. His interviews were published in newspapers and websites and broadcasted over radio stations, reaching a wide audience with the history of struggle, resistance and conquests of the Haitian people, as well as their adversities and challenges. On the other hand, the meeting stimulated the development of new initiatives in favour of the Human Right to Education in Haiti. For instance, the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (*Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales* - CLACSO) was present and pledged to cooperate in the field of higher education, a process that culminated with the launching of the CLACSO - State University of Haiti International Social Sciences Graduate Program, in November 2012, during its 24<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Mexico.

*Participation of professor and unionist Josué Merilien representing the REPT at the Global Partnership for Education Replenishment Conference, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 7 and 8 November 2011, which was attended by more than 230 people from 52 countries, including 35 ministers. Merilien stated that the Haitian State had weakened by succumbing to international pressure, adopting inappropriate policies within the national context, and he also pointed out the precarious situation educators were experiencing.*

## Challenges and lessons learned

- In a complex environment such as the one presented above, it is urgent to establish alliances between the different civil society organizations to work for the fulfilment of the human right to education for all and to address the trend of privatising education.
- It is necessary to strengthen the State as guarantor of this right and education as a State - not just a government - policy, in order to maintain continuity in educational policies. Over the past 22 years, the country had 26 different Ministers of Education, resulting in an average of a change of authority every 10 months.
- Likewise, it is necessary to retarget international cooperation and assistance in Haiti, and aim it at strengthening the State's ability to meet its obligations and to respect the sovereignty of its citizens.

*"Every country that supports the education system wants space and the (Haitian) state failed to control this situation."*

*"One cannot speak of cooperation when the Haitian people are not taken into account. Things normally happen due to imposition. That is why we believe in solidarity, above all. The government has its own objectives; we have to show solidarity to confront government plans."*

Patrice Florvilus at the Thematic Social Forum,  
Porto Alegre, January 2012



Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE



# Latin American and Caribbean

## CLADE in dialogue with national and international actors for the human right to education

In recent years, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) has become increasingly recognised as a space for socio-political action and reflection on education at regional level. Through its constant struggle and commitment to the human right to education, only made possible through strong and participatory democracies, CLADE brings together diverse voices that fight to overcome socioeconomic, gender related, ethnic, race and age injustice and discrimination in education.

CLADE works with regional networks, international organisations and national education coalitions in more than 15 countries. It offers a platform for exchanging experiences and generating knowledge on the human right to education, and develops and implements advocacy activities based on local practices from across education communities in the region.

CLADE's participation in regional and international decision-making spaces, such as meetings and conferences, is based on the engagement and consultation with its members. The main goal of such actions is to advocate with strategic stakeholders in Latin American and Caribbean countries, including parliamentarians, ministries of education, and courts of justice. CLADE also uses the media to ensure knowledge sharing and debate, and constantly seeks to strengthen the global movement that advocates for the right to education.

The following three advocacy experiences demonstrate how joint long-term advocacy processes between networks and organisations working at national, regional and international level contributed to expanding and strengthening policy formulation and action: participation in UNESCO's Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI, 2009); advocacy processes in Metas 2021 (Goals for 2021) of the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI, 2010); and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20, 2012). All these regional advocacy strategies were planned as long-term processes, contributing to achieve results that went beyond the conferences themselves.

### Collective advocacy for the right to education

**Global Mobilisation towards CONFINTEA VI.** In 2009, CLADE joined an international advocacy initiative (the International Civil Society Forum - FISC) organised by a group of organisations and networks from Latin America, Africa, Asia and Europe, aiming at preparing civil society participation in the UNESCO's Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI).

CONFINTEA is carried out every 12 years, being an event in which member states reassess and reaffirm their commitments to Youth and Adult Education (Y&AE). FISC was an open space which brought together civil society movements, organisations and individuals from 80 countries to promote reflection, democratic debates, exchange of experiences, and the formulation of proposals and inputs for the Conference.

This collective dialogue began a year before the event, allowing the development of a Declaration of joint proposals, founded on a human rights perspective, to be presented at the Conference, seeking to strengthen the final declaration signed by the participating States.

This experience is a milestone, which demonstrates the enormous potential of opening doors through the consolidation of a global movement united by the same ideals.

**Regional Collaboration to Strengthen Debate, Content and Monitoring around 2021 Education Goals.** In 2010 the Organisation of Ibero-American States announced its intention to establish an agreement between Ibero-American governments on education for the next generations, which is summarised in the proposal document, *Educational Goals for 2021: The Education We Want for the Generation of the Bicentennial*.



Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE



Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE

CLADE participates in the Rio+20 Working Group on Education and in the People's Summit.





Opening march at the Thematic Social Forum and the Global Education Forum (2012).



In dialogue with members and other civil society networks, including NGOs from Latin America and the Caribbean and Spain, CLADE actively led consultations to define the Educational Goals for 2021 from the civil society perspective, resulting in a new version: *The Education We Want for the Generation of the Bicentennial - Contributions from the perspective of civil society networks in Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain*.

A key moment of this process was the advocacy made during the *Ibero-American Congress of Education: Goals for 2021*, which was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from September, 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> 2010, when a meeting of States' representatives was scheduled in order to approve and launch the Goals for 2021 declaration. Once again, in the eve of this meeting, CLADE joined other organisations in the promotion of an open space to discuss the document and coordinate the collective advocacy process. More than 100 people from 16 countries in the region took part in the discussions.

Many contributions were incorporated by the Organisation of Ibero-American States, including recommendations on gender equality, non-discrimination, the right to early childhood care and education and the universal access to secondary education, both basic and higher.

CLADE, together with other organisations such as the Women's Network for Popular Education (REPEM, by its acronym in Spanish), the Latin American and the Caribbean Council for Popular Education (CEAAL, by its acronym in Spanish), the Social Contract for Education in Ecuador, the Educative MERCOSUR Platform and the World Education Forum has joined the Advisory Committee on the Education Goals for 2021, which brings together stakeholders from the public and private sectors, social movements and civil society, to monitor implementation of the Goals.



## Debating on the Right to Education in Rio+20.

CLADE is dialoguing with some Latin American States to boost a debate among governors, parliamentarians and civil society about how to materialize the concept of education as a human right in the educational practices. In this way CLADE is collaborating with other networks to develop the concept of living well (*buen vivir*), the idea of the rights of Mother Earth and the debates on social and environmental justice, understood as conditions to the realization of the human right to education. Conversely, this right is seen as a condition for living well, and also to enable the rights of Mother Earth and social and environmental justice.

This understanding is the result of an identity built in dialogue with anti-globalisation movements, participation in the World Social Forum and the World Education Forum, and in collaboration with Andean movements that have developed the concept of living well as opposed to the internationally established concept of development.

During the debate process prior to Rio+20, CLADE participated in a working group on Education, established in the World Social Forum 2012 with the common goal of advocating for a global project of sustainable societies with global responsibilities, both during and beyond Rio+20. This group produced the document "The Education We Need for the World we Want."

The working group on education was very active during the Rio+20, having participated in two Major Groups, the Women's and Civil Society's. It also fostered the Caucus on Education and the articulation between activists, organisations and representatives of the public sector from Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Europe. The working group continues to participate in debates on the post-2015 agenda, being especially engaged in monitoring forthcoming developments and debates on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Global Change.



Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE

Publication with contributions from civil society for the Organization of Ibero-American States' Education Goals for 2021 (2010).



Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE

Invitation to the CLADE photographic exhibit at the Ibero-American Congress of Education (2010).

Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE



Inauguration of the 2009 International Civil Society Forum (FISC).

Photo: CLADE'S ARCHIVE



Advocacy meeting in Buenos Aires (2010).

## Challenges and lessons learned

- The future scope of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) should focus on strengthening South-South collaboration and facilitation of dialogue on common interests.
- In fact, it is necessary to intensify a horizontal dialogue between South and North societies, breaking the logic of traditional international cooperation in which the North is conceived as a donor and the South as a recipient. A better idea is to build bridges between the hemispheres seeking to ensure the human right to education for all and global justice.
- Debates about the Post-2015 Education for All agenda are an excellent opportunity for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to continue broadening international dialogue.
- By joining forces with other networks and organisations, democratic practice and social participation is strengthened.
- Crossing the barriers that may exist for South-South and global collaboration can be enabled by the willingness to develop joint advocacy plans and actions. Language and other sociocultural factors are not a problem as long as there is a visible collaboration project based on principles of collective learning.



Audience watches the 2012 Global Social Forum debate on social and environmental justice, in which CLADE participated.





