

PRESS RELEASE

August 9, International Day of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous children have the right to an education which respects and protects their culture, customs and traditions.

- *UNICEF is committed to the States and indigenous peoples to contribute so that indigenous children can fulfill their educational process free of discrimination*

PANAMA CITY, Panama, August 9, 2016 - On the occasion of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples held today, the UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office reaffirms its commitment to continue advocating for compliance with Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning."

"UNICEF is committed to the States and indigenous peoples to contribute so that indigenous children can fulfill their educational process free of discrimination, from pre-school until the end of secondary education, helping them to achieve their full potential in an environment respectful and protective of their culture, customs and traditions, including those children living outside their communities", said UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and Caribbean, María Cristina Perceval.

Overall, there is a trend towards greater participation in primary education systems that varies between 82 and 95 percent in enrollment rates. However, access to secondary education is not as widespread, with about 30 percent of indigenous adolescents in Latin America out of school. These statistics, however, are based only on countries with available data, and therefore underestimate the barriers that indigenous children and adolescents face to access quality education in the region.

Inequities especially affecting indigenous children

Despite the progress the region has experienced in terms of poverty reduction, indigenous peoples have not benefited in equal proportion and instead today are twice as likely to be poor and 2.7 times more likely to live in extreme poverty.

Additionally, although there has been a general expansion of coverage of basic services for indigenous households, indigenous peoples remain between half and a third more likely than other Latin Americans to have access to basic sanitation and electricity. Although progress has

been made in terms of universal access to education at the primary education level, quality and cultural relevance of education available to indigenous children and adolescents remains an area that must be improved.

Commitment by States

In September 2014, the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held in New York, adopted a historic resolution through which heads of state and governments reaffirmed their "solemn commitment to respect, promote, further and not undermine in any way the rights of indigenous peoples and to uphold the principles of the Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples ", adopted in 2007.

Furthermore, Objective 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development call to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

The 826 indigenous peoples of Latin America are widely diverse socially, linguistically, politically and culturally and represent a population of about 45 million, which accounts for about 8 percent of the total population of the entire region.

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