Medellín Manifesto: Learning Cities for Inclusion

Preamble

1. We, the mayors, deputy mayors, officials and representatives of cities worldwide, education executives, education experts, researchers and teachers, and representatives of UN agencies, the private sector, and regional, international and civil society organizations from 100 cities and 60 countries, convened in Medellín, Colombia from 1 to 3 October 2019 for the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), dedicated to **inclusion as a principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities.**

2. With inclusion as an underlying principle, we work to extend lifelong learning opportunities to every individual, **including all vulnerable groups**, irrespective of their contexts and characteristics.

3. We recognize that inclusion goes hand-in-hand with **equity** to secure fair learning opportunities for population groups at risk of being overlooked, including **women**, **older people**, **ethnic minorities**, **migrants** and **indigenous people**.

4. We guarantee the **involvement of all citizens, especially vulnerable groups**, in lifelong learning opportunities throughout the stages of the learning process, programme planning, development, implementation and monitoring.

5. As stakeholders committed to cities' sustainable development, we recognize the **challenges** associated with urbanization, investor-driven urban development and rapid urban population growth, including the development of quality infrastructure, availability of attractive employment opportunities and the improvement of people's well-being, social cohesion and environmental protection.

6. We also recognize the **opportunities** of urbanization: as cities grow in size and number, they are able to give birth to new ideas, innovative practices, learning initiatives and technologies, and mobilize resources and innovation to find local solutions to emerging challenges.

7. At the heart of these challenges and opportunities lies **sustainable development**, which calls on us to ensure that our cities' infrastructures, local economies, cultures and social spaces develop in a way that empowers individuals and communities and respects the planet, applying a human rights-based approach and principles of democratic citizenship.

8. We recognize that sustainable development can only be achieved if **lifelong learning** opportunities are available to all learners, across all age groups and levels and types of education, regardless of modality, space and motivation for learning.

9. In the pursuit of sustainable development and lifelong learning for all, we acknowledge the importance of **participatory cross-sectoral governance**, including local authorities and other levels of government, while actively engaging research and university experts. We also acknowledge the role of civil society organizations, along with that of the private sector, and encourage multi-stakeholder involvement at all stages.

Renewing commitments

10. Gathering in Medellín, we invoke our **existing commitments** to promote sustainable development and lifelong learning in cities by:

    a. Reaffirming our determination to achieve the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — adopted by world leaders in 2015.

    b. Recognizing the role of learning cities in the fulfilment of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular **SDG 4** ('ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') and **SDG 11** ('make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable').

    c. Redoubling our efforts to achieve SDG 4, in light of recent alarming findings that **the world is off track** in achieving the global education goal by 2030.

    d. Stressing the relevance of *Key Features of Learning Cities* as a guiding document and normative instrument for building and measuring progress in learning cities.

    e. Reaffirming the importance of *Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action*, which indicates how global goals can be translated into local actions through the creation of green and healthy, equitable and inclusive learning cities that offer opportunities for decent work and entrepreneurship.

    f. Recalling the rich exchanges of the three previous **International Conferences on Learning Cities** in Beijing, Mexico City and Cork.

Placing inclusion at the heart of sustainable cities

11. We acknowledge that inclusion is fundamental to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its vow to **leave no one behind**.

12. In Medellín, we are building on the momentum of the 2030 Agenda, the Incheon Declaration of 2015, as well as **UNESCO's International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education**, held in Cali, Colombia, from 11 to 13 September 2019.

13. While we focus more on inclusion across all learning modalities in cities, we aim to further strengthen and expand the Cali Forum's **platform for dialogue and cooperation on inclusion.**

14. We assert **inclusion** as a principle for lifelong learning and sustainable cities and will foster it in cities by:

    a. Guaranteeing the **involvement of vulnerable groups** in lifelong learning opportunities throughout the stages of the learning process, programme planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

    b. Supporting endeavours to **more systematically collect data** on education and learning, specifically on issues affecting vulnerable groups and excluded populations in cities, so that interventions are built on realistic assessments of the current situation.

    c. Devising lifelong learning initiatives in response to the **specific needs** of diverse groups, such as girls and women, older people, long-term unemployed and youth and adolescents, whether that means strengthening school-to-work transition policies for youth at risk, increasing the number of language classes for migrants, widening participation in digital skills programmes or producing measures to monitor the accessibility and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

    d. **Contextualising** learning policy and practices, so that they take account of rural developments and emergency situations.

    e. **Improving infrastructure** as a prerequisite for inclusion, especially in the cases of physical accessibility for persons with disabilities and internet access for digitally excluded populations.

f. Understanding that **excluded groups are not homogeneous** – with many individuals excluded in multiple ways – and thus striving for a holistic approach to inclusion that fosters personal development, strengthens communities and creates more inclusive societies contributing to global peace and understanding.

g. **Sharing** with, and **learning** from, the inclusive policies and practices of other learning cities and other learning communities across systems and cultural contexts with the support of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.