

Digital Technologies for Leveraging Public Policies in Education for Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Children and Young People: Challenges and Opportunities in LAC



Fundación
Ceibal

Digital Technologies for Leveraging
Public Policies in Education for
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Children and Young People:
Challenges and Opportunities in LAC



Ceibal Foundation team

Director of the Ceibal Foundation:

Roberto Porzecanski

Project leader:

Martín Rebour

Principal Investigator:

Cristén Dávalos

Operative Project Coordinator:

Jesica Pouzo Paccosi

Author of this document and Consultant of the
project:

María Cecilia Gordano



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This work was made possible by a grant from
the International Development Research Center
(IDRC), Ottawa, Canada.

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Acronyms

CYP: Children and Young People

DEP: Digital Education Policy

GRE-LAC: Regional Education Group for Latin America

EMIS: Education Management Information Systems

ICT: Information and Communication Technologies

IDB: Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

IEP: Inclusive Education Policy

IOM: International Organization for Migration

LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

OLPC: One Laptop Per Child

RMD: Refugee, Migrant and Displaced

RMDP: Refugee, Migrant and Displaced Persons

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Executive Summary

As intraregional human mobility in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) increasingly becomes a structural phenomenon—marked by a high proportion of children and young people of school age—the urgency of developing comprehensive national and regional strategies to ensure their right to quality education and digital inclusion grows.

Most governments in the region are proactively adapting legal and regulatory frameworks to facilitate refugee, migrant and displaced (RMD) children and young people (CYP) universal access to education, although persistent barriers remain, including lack of documentation, language differences and discrimination.

Digital technologies have the potential to improve educational processes –from learning and teaching to information management- by offering immediacy, ubiquity and widespread availability of personalized educational resources, interactions and information, at relatively low costs and adapted to diverse learner profiles, and socioeconomic and cultural contexts. However, digital divides also pose new challenges to education inclusion due to limited connectivity, insufficient skills and awareness of digital rights, policy gaps, among others.

This paper explores the role of digital technologies in improving public policies for the education inclusion of RMD CYP in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on desk research and 13 semi-structured interviews with key informants from government education services, international and multi-lateral organizations, and a non-governmental organization.

The results show that while there are no specific public policies in LAC to support digital education inclusion of RMD persons, various initiatives and strategies have been implemented at the intersection of Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) and Digital Education Policy (DEP) by states in collaboration with multi-stakeholders. IEP and DEP run along different conceptual tracks but are increasingly intertwined, providing hints, evidence and frameworks for action that could be useful for the development of more systematic and comprehensive related policies in the near future. However, both IEP and DEP face policy gaps in their implementation and effectiveness –mainly due to professional and institutional capacities, cultural biases, policy discontinuity, policy fragmentation within and between countries, lack of planning and monitoring, among other factors. The biggest challenge, however, continues to be ensuring education rights to RMD CYP in transit, a volatile population that often cannot access formal education systems and remains, as one informant expressed, “invisible” to states.

The present document offers recommendations for future policy improvements for the digital education inclusion of RMD CYP according to a 5C framework that addresses the challenges and opportunities of digital and multicultural dimensions of connectivity, content, capacity, cooperation and collaboration, and communication and information.

Introduction and Research Overview

This document aims to “explore and systematize the role of digital technologies to address challenges and exploit opportunities for public policies towards inclusive and equitable integration of RMDP in education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)” (Specific Research Goal 2), from the perspective of 20 key informants working at the crossroads of human mobility and education in public policy implementation, improvement and/or articulation. It is the third product of a series of policy briefs (PB) focused on RMD CYP educational challenges and opportunities with digital technology.

PB 1¹ focused on the challenges faced by RMD children and young people to both access to quality education and to stay in education systems including lack of economic resources and family support, bureaucratic and structural obstacles, language barriers and learning loss due to interrupted schooling. It explored the potential of digital technologies to address some of these challenges through ongoing initiatives in the region, highlighting the need for more leadership from ministries of education. PB 2² mapped key stakeholders working at the intersection of education, human mobility and digital technologies in LAC, identifying fruitful ongoing multi stakeholder collaborations but also calling for more systematic and data informed policies and programs.

PB 3 comprises desk research on public policies related to RMD CYP digital and education inclusion in LAC and 12 semi-structured interviews, conducted between October 2024 and January 2025, with 20 key informants³ from:

- 7 educational governmental services from Argentina (Government of Buenos Aires), Colombia (Government of Bogotá), Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, and Peru, mainly working in inclusive education
- 4 International and multilateral organizations: including United Nation agencies UNICEF and UNHCR, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)⁴
- 1 NGO, Save the Children⁵

1 See Policy Brief 1: <https://documentos.ceibal.edu.uy/portal/2025/02/Policy-briefing-1.1.pdf>

2 See Policy Brief 2: <https://documentos.ceibal.edu.uy/portal/2025/02/Policy-briefing-2.2.pdf>

3 There were 9 individual interviews, one with two participants and two group interviews with five and four participants each. Interviews had a duration of one hour on average and were conducted in Spanish. They were recorded after participants' agreement and signature of an informed consent form. Transcriptions were assisted by artificial intelligence; revised and sent to interviewees for their validation. The data collected was analyzed following an interpretive approach. DeepL Translate supported the translation of participants' quotes.

4 One informant, who works for an international organization, preferred that the organization not be named.

5 See Annex A for a detailed list of informants. We especially thank their participation in this research as well as Dr. Matías Dodel's valuable suggestions as external reviewer.

Public Policies in LAC Supporting Digital Education Inclusion for Migrant and Displaced Populations

The increasing and ever-growing use and adoption of digital technologies in all spheres of life has opened new opportunities, as well as challenges, for achieving more equal societies based on sustainable development, participatory and robust democracies (CEPAL/ECLAC, 2022; 2021; OECD, 2023a). The **immediacy, ubiquity and availability of data, information and communication** offer enormous potential to enhance decision-making processes and outcomes at multiple levels and sectors. However, **uneven access and use of digital resources** hinder this affirmative potential and reinforces long-standing inequalities affecting people in vulnerable situations and underserved regions worldwide (CEPAL/ECLAC, 2022; 2021; Galperin, 2017; Helsper, 2021). In this context, **public policy plays a key role in narrowing digital gaps** by effectively implementing digital inclusion strategies (García Zaballos et al., 2024; Robinson et al., 2020).

Digital inclusion has become a fundamental right, also in education (Salvatierra and Kelly, 2023; Cobo & Rivas, 2024; UNESCO, 2023; Selwyn, 2021; Helsper, 2021). As a multidimensional concept, it might refer to access, connectivity, use, and outcomes (OECD, 2023a:9) and draws on several policy frameworks, including educational policy, legislation on digital technology services and use, as well as human rights law (Mintz et al., 2024), as well as policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality.

Although there are no public policies in LAC supporting digital education inclusion for RMDP, various initiatives and strategies emerge at the intersection of inclusive education policies (IEP) and digital education policies (DEP). While increasingly offering robust guidelines and frameworks for inclusive digital education, both IEP and DEP present policy gaps in their implementation and effectiveness. These challenges stem primarily from limitations in professional and institutional capacities, cultural biases, policy discontinuity, fragmentation, and inadequate planning and monitoring, among other factors.

1.1. Inclusive Education Policies (IEP)

Inclusive education policies, led by ministries of education, include targeted interventions to ensure quality education for social groups in vulnerable situations. These include individuals affected by disability, socio-economic difficulties, gender, race, ethnicity, place of origin or residence, and other intersectional variables (UNESCO, 2015), as well as those in contexts of mobility.

The legal framework for inclusive education encompasses numerous international⁶, regional⁷ and national laws, agreements and conventions. Most LAC countries have enacted laws and decrees to

6 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UNHCR's Refugee Education 2030 Strategy, Global Compacts on Refugees (2018), Migration (2018), for Young People in Humanitarian Action, among others.

7 For example, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, the Quito Process, the Declarations of Buenos Aires (2017 and 2022) and Santiago de Chile (2024), the Cochabamba Agreement (2018).

guarantee access to education for RMDP regardless of their legal status⁸, streamlining bureaucratic procedures for enrollment in public schools through measures such as flexible requisites and calendars (IDB, 2023). Notable examples include Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile (Gelber et al., 2021). For instance, Costa Rica defines itself as a “pluricultural and multi-ethnic republic” and has implemented the III National Integration Plan 2023-2027 to optimize the integration of migrants and country nationals across six strategic pillars, including education.

Despite governments’ efforts to change and adapt norms and laws, regional, sub-regional and intra-country challenges remain, mainly related to overstretched public education systems, limited funding, teacher shortages and other inequalities, as well as socio-economic disparities, cultural contexts, migration dynamics and policy gaps (IDB, 2022; 2023).

School Documentation Vs. Placement Tests: A Regional Challenge

A major challenge is the **absence of comprehensive regional policies** for recognizing, validating, and certifying RMD students’ previous knowledge and learning trajectories across borders (Caarls et al., 2021). This issue arises particularly when school certificates and prior educational qualifications are unavailable or lack legal recognition (UNHCR, 2019). In these cases, RMD CYP often must take a placement test or exam based on the national curricula of the host country and eventually get additional training for learning recovery. Governments have implemented various measures to facilitate integration. For example, in Ecuador, a ministerial agreement “establishes a placement exam which measures skills and not knowledge (...) while Brazil, eliminates the requirement of sworn translation of original documents to Portuguese and makes the evaluation process in the student’s mother tongue” (UNESCO, 2021:22).

On the one hand, education authorities argue that **placement tests** are necessary to ensure that CYP who lack documentation of their last recognized year of education are placed in the appropriate level. On the other hand, if RMD CYP do not perform as expected for their age, they may be placed in classes with much younger children. This creates problems of over-ageing, demotivation and underachievement among a population already exposed to the complexities of human mobility, including disrupted schooling, socio-emotional distress, and in some cases, the traumatic effects of discrimination, violence and lack of access to basic rights such as food, housing and healthcare. Vilma Gómez, a member of the Migration Pedagogies Team at the Secretariat of Education of the District of Bogotá, Colombia, pointed out that placement tests are not standardized and rely on school autonomy and staff criteria, leading to multiple challenges, as there is not “sufficient coverage for extra-age classrooms, problems start to arise in school coexistence, relationships, serious emotional problems for children and their families. It is not cool that someone from Venezuela, whose circumstances of arrival are unknown, is simply placed in a class based on their gaps rather than their potential”.

8 Some examples include Argentina (National Education Law 26.206, 2006 and Migration Law 2003), Brazil (Migration Law 13.445), Chile (Inclusion Law 20.845), Colombia (General Education Law 115, 1994) (Costa Rica (Migration Law, 2009; National Integration Plan 2023-2027), Ecuador (Organic Law of Intercultural Education), Mexico (Education Law, 2014), Peru (Decree 1350, Migration Law) and Uruguay (Law 18250).

Structural and Relational Integration

In South America, countries have implemented policies to facilitate migrant children's access to public schools, especially after receiving significant migrant inflows from Venezuela. Since 2014, more than 7.3 million Venezuelans have left their country, and by the end of 2023, approximately 6.3 million were residing in South America (mainly in Colombia, followed by Peru, Chile and Ecuador), representing about 86% of the total number of Venezuelan migrants worldwide (R4V, 2024).

In the Andean region, "public policy actions have been carried out to eliminate documentary barriers and extend educational admission processes" (UNICEF, 2022:5). Colombia, Ecuador and Peru have implemented the Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) of Education Cannot Wait that aims to "to ensure that Venezuelan refugee and migrant children and adolescents in the region, as well as children from host communities, have improved access to inclusive and quality education and achieve learning outcomes" (UNESCO, n/d).

Colombia has facilitated the nationalization of children born in the country from Venezuelan parents, regardless of their legal status (Resolution 847), as well as the legal residence of Venezuelans who have irregularly migrated with children born in Colombia since November 2015 (Montoya et al., 2020). However, Vilma Gómez observed that "the regularization process has had setbacks" when it accepted children but later restricted the process for adults. In this sense, she stated that there are **intra-country policy gaps between the national and local levels**, explaining that while the District of Bogotá, the Colombian city with the largest migrant population⁹ "is moving forward with its public policy, the nation has yet to update its approach at the pace globally required in terms of human mobility. This generates challenges for us, for example, in the regularization process".

In the Southern Cone, Chile ensures access to and continuity in the educational system for migrant children and teenagers (Presidential Instructive 5, 2015). Those without a national identification number can enroll using a Temporary School Id number (Ordinario 894/2016). Since 2021, they have also been granted a temporary visa (Law 21325) to access social assistance, healthcare, education, and other essential services.

RMD CY access, permanence and graduation in the formal education system depend on multiple levels (individual, social and contextual) and layers of support: pedagogical (remediation, reinforcement, acceleration programs), economic (scholarships, materials and uniforms), socioemotional (psychological services) and cultural (language classes, multicultural contents and trained staff), among others.

At this point, it is worth mentioning a conceptual distinction¹⁰ between so-called "**structural integration**" and "**relational integration**" (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018). The former refers to people's integration through access to services and institutions, and has been the focus of most inclusive education policies. The latter is more difficult to implement and measure as it "is a sociocultural

9 Colombia has received 2.8 million Venezuelan migrants since 2018 (R4V, 2024), in addition to the 8 million internally displaced people from its own internal conflict (Migración Colombia). Bogotá had a migration boom from 2017 to 2020: "In 2017 the share reached 4.3%, and for the years 2020-2021 it reached 6.1%" (https://www.sdp.gov.co/sites/default/files/boletin_poblacion_migrante.pdf)

10 These concepts emerged from research on the integration of refugees in national education systems, e.g., in Europe.

process, related to identity development and transformation; it includes both an individual-level sense of belonging, or connectedness, as well as group-level social cohesion” (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018:10). Both dimensions intertwine, though public policies have tended to focus on the structural.

Relational integration might be achieved through inclusive education policies framed by **multicultural and human rights perspectives**, recognizing the positive potential of cultural diversity and human mobility for both people on the move and host communities. Interviewees from Colombia, Costa Rica, and Argentina, as well as informants from UNHCR, IDB, and Save the Children, agreed that multiculturalism remains an outstanding challenge in LAC public policy regarding RMDP integration. They expressed concern over rising xenophobia and discrimination affecting students, families, schools (teachers and staff) and society in general, while also highlighting the potential of education to reverse inequalities and embrace cultural diversity. Victor Pineda, National Advisor at the Intercultural Education Department of the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica, pointed out that:

“In the classroom, it does not matter whether you have documents or not, nor your migratory status, what matters is recognizing the person as a living educational resource in themselves. Having that person in the classroom is like having an open window to the country they come from enriching any subject we are developing. It is a win-win process for both migrants and non-migrants.”

One of the main challenges for the Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica is that 60% of the 62,320 foreign students registered (out of a total of 1,200,000 students, by November 2024), “have an irregular migratory status, either with documentation or undocumented, so we are working hard to promote a culture of regularization”, explained Mr. Pineda. Regarding foreign students’ places of origin, “Regarding foreign students’ places of origin, more than 90% are from Nicaragua. However, when considering the full 93%, this group also includes people from Venezuela, the United States, Panama, El Salvador, and Colombia”.

From a regional perspective, Marta Luzes, Specialist in the Migration Unit of the Inter-American Development Bank, highlights the regulatory efforts made by Latin American and Caribbean governments to include RMDP in education, as well as their willingness to seek solutions to the multiple challenges faced by this population on a daily basis, such as lack of documentation, information, economic resources, discrimination and xenophobia in schools, among others. IDB support various initiatives focused on the socio-emotional integration of RMD CYP in schools by promoting “a positive school climate” and “social cohesion” among peers, through diverse curricular and non-curricular proposals, for example in Guatemala (through sport), El Salvador, Colombia, Panamá and Costa Rica, among others. IDB also supports teachers’ multicultural training, as well as the mapping and dissemination of the care protocol routes for the migrant population in the education system.

Language diversity constitutes a major challenge for the educational inclusion of RMDP whose mother tongue differs from the official language of the destination country. In Brazil, growing numbers of Venezuelan, Haitian, and other migrants can learn Portuguese through specific programs

offered by public universities, both in person and online¹¹. However, coverage and impact have not been systematized due to the absence of plurilingual educational policies: “Brazilian schools still don’t have institutionalized arrangements for teaching (...) Portuguese, nor do they have proposals for valuing the migrant languages and cultures that coexist in some regions of the Brazilian education system. What we have today are isolated initiatives by NGOs, foundations and civil society” (Friedrich et al., 2021: 14).

The Government of Buenos Aires, in Argentina, offers personalized cultural mediation services to schools with non-Spanish-speaking students and their families, mainly from China and, more recently, from Russia, as explained by Evelia Romano and Lucía Baigorri, from the Spanish as a Second Language for Inclusion (ELSI) area of the Operational Management of Languages in Education of the city. Although the area “does not have the power to evaluate the quality of the interventions a posteriori”, as Lucía explained, it responds to schools’ demands by offering recommendations, workshops, print and online materials (e.g., multilingual videos and a diagnostic tool for assessing language skills available for teachers to download) to facilitate the educational inclusion of children from a multilingual perspective that considers language diversity as an asset rather than a barrier or a problem.

Evelia Romano also coordinates the area of Intercultural Bilingual Education, which supports children with indigenous language backgrounds who may also speak Quechua, Aymara or Guaraní¹² at home. She explained that “the phenomenon of indigenous languages is much more considered in intercultural bilingual education, which is part of the Education Law of 2006, so you have a legal structure that provides for the attention to indigenous languages, which you do not have for foreign languages”.

In the multilingual Caribbean region, language barriers remain a significant challenge, together with restrictive legal frameworks that prevent universal access to education and other services for migrants. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, children must have a regular immigration status to enroll in school, (Adbul-Majied, & Kinkead-Clark, 2022; UNESCO, 2020), although some timid improvements are on course. In the Dominican Republic, national children with Haitian parents face several difficulties to enroll in school if they cannot prove citizenship. They must take mandatory national tests to graduate (Waddick, 2020) and face language difficulties as school language is Spanish, while their mother tongue is Creole and in some cases French.

In addition to language diversity, variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, migratory status, socio-economic level, previous educational trajectories, among others, constitute intersectional variables that shape RMD CYP educational inclusion and must be considered in inclusive education policy design and implementation.

11 For example, the University Centre of Maringá (UNICESUMAR) developed a Portuguese course for refugees and migrants implemented by the IOM with financial support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). RMD children can attend Escolas de Tempo Integral, an initiative of the Brazilian Secretary of Education to offer language and cultural support.

12 Quechua speakers mainly live in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador; Aymara speakers are located in Bolivia, Peru and northern Chile, while most Guaraní speakers are in Paraguay.

Cristina Sousa, Protection Associate-Community based protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), stated that technical education programs for displaced youth *“must be based on a [thorough] understanding of the population we are working with because there are particularities that enhance or eliminate their ability to participate”*.

In Transit

One of the main challenges is how states conceptualize and respond to migration as a structural phenomenon in the region while ensuring RMD CYP’s right to education and digital inclusion in the context of mobility, beyond schools and formal education. People in transit constitute a major challenge for national and regional public policy in general and educational inclusion in particular, as states are not always able to reach the mobile population and grant them basic rights. According to Susanna Urbano, from the NGO Save the Children: “Migrant children or those in transit are invisible (...) therefore states delegate responsibility to humanitarian actors (...) They are not contemplated in public policy beyond their integration or inclusion in the educational systems”. Her organization advocates “for Ministries of Education and different state actors to assume responsibility and secure the funding and capacities to support these children who, while in their territory, are their responsibility, because they are children, regardless of where they come from, how they arrive, or what they come for”.

Invisibility impacts directly on access to basic rights, since in the absence of a legal subject there is no entitlement to rights. In addition, when human mobility becomes a crisis, the right to education dissolves in front of other basic needs deemed more urgent, such as health, food, and shelter. There are contested discourses on this issue. Ruth Custode, Education Regional Specialist from UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, explained that “it is very difficult to defend education within the humanitarian field (...), to understand that the right to education is a right equal to the rest, neither above nor below them, and that it must be guaranteed”.

1.2. Digital Education Policies

The increasing integration of digital technologies in formal and non-formal education has demonstrated both benefits and challenges, offering valuable lessons in terms of learning, teaching and information management processes. Digital technologies have **diversified learning and teaching experiences** beyond in-person instruction during school time, expanding the potential of remote learning¹³, enabling hybrid learning experiences and multiple delivery modes, such as synchronous or asynchronous, through analog and/or digital channels (Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021) and more personalized experiences through adaptive learning (Rachmad, 2022). While “the evidence on the relationship between ICT use and curricular learning achievement is inconclusive in terms of tangible outcomes” (Martínez et al., 2020:56), access to, use and appropriation of digital resources are increasingly valued competencies for 21st-century citizenships, and “it is often the case that technologically disadvantaged groups within each country are also those for which the educational outcomes lag the most” (Rodríguez Segura, 2020:6).

Learning outcomes require a multidimensional analysis in which individual, social and contextual factors are thoroughly considered (Trucco & Palma, 2020; Correa & Pavez, 2017), as they are influenced by “parental socioeconomic background, features of the learning space, the language of instruction, and peer interactions” (Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021). Notably, peer interaction is “a critical factor influencing language skills and socioemotional development” as well as “student motivation to succeed at school” (Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021).

Robust digital education policy (DEP) frameworks at both national and regional levels can help build consensus and ensure that “quality education is provided as a public good and a human right, with a particular focus on the most marginalized” (UN), according to criteria of relevance, equity, scalability and sustainability (UNESCO, 2023). DEP key analytical dimensions include: 1) Strategic visions and policy coordination; 2) Pedagogical approaches, curricula and assessment; 3) Governance, guidance and regulatory frameworks; 4) Funding; 5) Infrastructure and innovation; 6) Capacity building; 7) Human resource policies and 8) Monitoring and evaluation.¹⁴(OECD, 2023b).

In the LAC region, DEP frameworks are heterogeneous and have experienced progressive changes in orientations and strategies in the last twenty years, turning the initial strong focus on access (infrastructures for universal connectivity and device distribution) towards more nuanced and innovative approaches “that aim at educational innovation through the proposal of new pedagogical models, the introduction of curricular content linked to 21st century skills¹⁵, robotics and programming, and the development of learning management platforms” (Kelly, n/d:1).

Regarding access, countries have implemented diverse public policies strategies, according to their needs, capacities and resources available, focusing on the provision of connectivity, or equipment, or both. For example, in Chile, “*Aulas conectadas*” covers both dimensions of access, while “*Conec-*

13 Remote learning involves “synchronous and asynchronous instruction provided in a place outside the classroom (...) from paper-based, take-home packages to online platforms. (...) also possible through a variety of different channels, such as mobile phones, television, radio, and tutors” (Muñoz-Najar et al., 2021:16).

14 See UNESCO, 2022a.

15 These include “new technological trends: augmented reality, internet of things, artificial intelligence, convergence between platforms and social networks, among others” (Kelly, n/d:1).

tividad para la Educación 2030 focuses on connectivity, and *“Tecnologías de Acceso Universal para la Educación”* and *“Robótica Aplicada”* provide equipment. Other examples of policy efforts providing connectivity are: Brazil’s *“Programa de Innovación Educativa Conectada”*, El Salvador’s *“Programa Cerrando la Brecha del Conocimiento”*, and in the Dominican Republic’s *“República Digital”*. Some initiatives focused on equipment include Bolivia’s *“Una computadora por docente”* and Colombia’s *“Computadores para educar”*. Successful policies covering both connectivity and equipment include Argentina’s *“Conectar Igualdad”*, Costa Rica’s *“Programa Nacional de Tecnologías Móviles Tecno@prender”*, Honduras’ *“Programa Nacional de Transformación Educativa Digital”*, and Uruguay’s *“Plan Ceibal”*¹⁶, which is considered one of the most successful and sustainable public policies for digital and educational inclusion in the region.

Ceibal

- Created in 2007 by Executive Presidential Decree 144/007, Plan Ceibal takes its name from the acronym for Basic Computing Educational Connectivity for Online Learning¹⁷.
- Inspired by the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) 1:1 model, it provides laptops to students and teachers for use both in school and at home. Initially implemented in primary schools, it expanded to the entire education system within a decade.
- It was implemented in four phases: 1) 2007-2009: Delivery of devices to students and teachers; schools were connected to the internet; 2) 2010-2012: Deployment of platforms and teacher support; 3) 2013-2019: New pedagogies; transformation of teaching practices through the integration of computers into the learning process. (e.g., the Global Learning Network, the Computational Thinking Program and the Digital Citizenship Education Initiative); and 4) 2020-2025: Systemic approach, teacher orientation and blended teaching; strengthening of inter-agency processes within the education system (e.g., the creation of the Inter-Agency Data Board) and promotion of international exchanges
- Plan Ceibal contributed to the reduction of the national digital divide (Cobo and Rivera-Vargas, 2018). Between 2007 and 2022, computer access among students aged 6 to 13 rose from 30 % to 90 %, with the largest increase among students from lower-income households (from 9 % to 86 %). Source: Continuous Household Survey. (Ceibal en cifras, n/d). By 2022, 66 % of public primary and secondary school students from lower-income households rely on Plan Ceibal as their only source of computer access.
- Key success factors: sustainable and flexible in time, partly due to strong institutional framework and governance for digital education, created, designed and promoted by the state. It follows a multi-systemic, multi-stakeholder strategy, involving the

¹⁶ Plan Ceibal is called Ceibal since 2022, when it also changed its logo.

¹⁷ Original in Spanish: *Conectividad Educativa de Informática Básica para el Aprendizaje en Línea*.

National Public Education Administration (ANEP) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) of Uruguay

- Active engagement of the educational community, schools, teachers and families
- Continuous monitoring of users in their context, adapting to evolving priorities of digital innovation
- It has enabled an innovation ecosystem (Rivera-Vargas & Cobo, 2018), e.g., creation of the Ceibal Foundation (CF) in 2015 to create and promote independent and high-quality research, in alliance with national and international stakeholders and funders.
- It has enhanced a virtuous circle of different forms of learning, articulating formal and non-formal education, face-to-face and online learning experiences, individual and community learning.
- Fostered networking with national and international professional learning communities

While the program successfully increased access to technology, it also highlighted the necessity of addressing issues of online safety and children's right to participation in the digital spaces (Maggione, 2021). In the early 2000s various programs prioritized universal access by providing students and teachers with devices for both in-school and out-of-school use ("anytime, anywhere" learning). One notable example is the **One Laptop Per Child (OLPC)** initiative, which adopted a one-to-one learning model.

The universal access approach has increasingly addressed inclusive education and digital gaps (Soletic & Kelly, 2022; UNESCO, 2024; Trucco & Palma, 2020; Claro & Grau, 2024; Cobo et al., 2021; Cabello, 2021, and elsewhere). This aligns with international¹⁸ and regional consensus that acknowledges how inequalities shape access to technology and educational outcomes across diverse populations (according to intersectional variables of socioeconomic level, age, gender, ethnic origin, disabilities, place of residence, among others), and territories including , low-, middle- and high-income countries, rural-urban areas, diverse neighborhoods in gentrified cities.

At the regional level, the 2024 Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean (eLAC)¹⁹ advocates for "affordable, quality broadband connectivity for all people, with special emphasis on people in vulnerable conditions, and in unserved and underserved areas, remote and border areas, and rural and semi-urban areas". Each country has developed its own national digital strategy and le-

18 As expressed in UN led initiatives, namely the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Transforming Education Summit process, the Global Rewired Declaration on Connectivity for Education, and the International Commission on the Futures of Education, among others (UN, n/d).

19 eLAC is agreed in Ministerial Conferences organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CEPAL).

gal frameworks²⁰, influenced by diverse ecosystems of actors and resources, as well as significant subregional differences in economic development, infrastructure, policy priorities, and institutional capacity. As explored in the second policy brief of this series, institutional capacities have been strengthened through multi-stakeholder alliances, leading to various institutional configurations. Notable examples include national agencies created to support the implementation of digital education national policies, such as the Center of Innovation (CIM) of the Ministry of Education of Chile, and Ceibal in Uruguay (OECD, 2023).

Uneven **access to internet connectivity** and devices is an endemic problem in the LAC region, with disparities between subregions, countries, rural and urban areas, schools, homes and individuals of diverse socioeconomic and cultural profiles. According to the ECLAC Observatory for Digital Development, the LAC region has improved key digital connectivity indicators in the last decades, though it remains below the world average in the quality of connections, both in fixed and mobile broadband (CEPAL/ECLAC, 15 February 2024). Fixed broadband penetration in the region steadily increased between 2007 and 2022, however by 2022 it remained below 20% of the population, a low percentage if compared with 40% in Europe (CEPAL/ECLAC, n/d). In addition, the digital divide by household income level also persists: “in 2022, internet penetration in higher-income households was almost double that of lower-income households in some countries. Also, 77% of urban households in Latin America and the Caribbean are connected, while in rural areas this percentage is only 38%”. (CEPAL/ECLAC, 15 February 2024).

Countries also face digital gaps within their territories. El Salvador, Honduras and Paraguay present the highest household connectivity gap between the highest and lowest income quintiles (Kelly, n/d:8). Argentina, Mexico and Peru also present important differences in household access to computers. Moreover, rural-urban disparities imprint other modes of relating to technology that extend beyond connectivity issues. The “interplay between contextual and individual factors related to Internet adoption in isolated rural communities” (Correa & Pavez, 2017) reveals how personal interests, generational differences and economic activities intertwine to produce other **ICT use and appropriation repertoires**.

Educational technologies cannot ensure educational equality and inclusion per se, as “some of the most common inputs in EdTech interventions are still unlikely to reach the most deprived sectors of society in developing countries” (Rodríguez Segura, 2020:6). In the LAC region, governments are increasingly investing in improving **school connectivity**, as the locus par excellence for providing universal inclusive digital education, “building citizenship in general, and digital citizenship in particular” (Martínez et al., 2020:56). This is an ongoing process and, with the exception of Uruguay and Costa Rica, most countries still face digital gaps:

- “62% of primary schools and 75% of secondary schools have computer equipment
- 44% of primary schools and 66% of secondary schools have internet connectivity

20 For example: Argentina (PEN Decree 1552/2010. National Telecommunications Plan and 11/2022. Conectar Igualdad Plan); Bolivia Law 164 General Law on Telecommunications and ICT (2011), Brazil (Decree 7175/2010. National Broadband Program), Chile (Law 18.168 General Telecommunications Law), Costa Rica Law 8.642 General Telecommunications Law (2008), Ecuador (Organic Law of Telecommunications, 2015), Dominican Republic (Law 153 General Law on Telecommunications, 1998), Honduras (Decree 96/2013, Law on Literacy in ICT and Executive Decree PCM-132/2020. National Program for Digital Educational Transformation), Mexico (Decree of Reform of the General Education Law, on the Use and Regulation of Technologies in the National Education System, 2014). Source: https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/eje/educacion_y_tic

- On average, between one-third and one-quarter of the educational institutions lack both computer equipment and internet connectivity” (Soletic and Kelly, 2022:24)

These percentages on computer equipment and connectivity at schools in LAC should be also contextualized with information on the quality of access and use of digital resources, both inside and outside schools (Romero & Krichesky, 2021). Based on her experience with non-Spanish speaking families in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, Evelia Romano reflected that when “working with technology, first, [it is necessary] to know whether families have access and what [kind of] access they have, because one thing is to work from a computer and another thing is to work from a cell phone; one thing is when each member of the family has a mobile phone and another is when everyone has to share a single device (...) This is also information that schools need to be aware of”. Lucía Baigorri, Technical Assistant in the same service, pointed out that “during the pandemic, when schools drew on Google apps to provide remote education alternatives, some Sino-speaking children faced obstacles to participate in online classes and interactions because Google was not enabled in their families’ devices (...) These issues are not due to lack of goodwill on the part of the school, but rather a lack of awareness that comes to light when engagement [with families] takes place”.

LAC extensive territories also face important **rural-urban digital divides** that require special efforts to invest in technological infrastructures, improve internet broadband connections, and bridge the digital divide between urban centers and remote, rural areas.

In South America, DEP and digital infrastructures are well developed, especially in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, where ministries of education play an active role and maintain ongoing digital education programs, such as Uruguay’s Plan Ceibal (2007 to date) and Argentina’s *Conectar Igualdad* (2010–2018, 2022–2024) (Kelly, n/d:1).

Bolivia and Paraguay lag behind in digital governance initiatives due to limited funding and infrastructure challenges (Kelly, n/d; Lugo et al., 2020). This is also the case for El Salvador and Nicaragua in Central America, whereas Costa Rica and Panama have strong digital policies and a robust infrastructure ecosystem. In Belize, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) has recently included Science and Technology to the educational portfolio, through initiatives such as ConnectED, to improve Wi-Fi infrastructure in educational institutions, and Code Caribbean, “a two-year computer science curriculum coupled with socio-emotional and entrepreneurial skills targeting 11- to 13-year-olds” (MoECST, 2022:9). Given the inequalities among countries, strong regional cooperation has been sought to share digital resources and knowledge, as seen in initiatives such as the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination (CECC) of the Central American Integration System (SICA), as indicated by representatives from, Costa Rica and Honduras interviewed for this report.

In the Andean subregion, Colombia and Peru have invested heavily in digital education platforms. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of education of Peru promoted the educational platform “I learn at home” (*Aprendo en Casa*, <https://aprendoencasa.pe>) to deliver remote public education through internet, radio, and TV (UNESCO, 2022b:20).

Venezuela remains less advanced in DEP, partly due to economic crises and political instability (Espinel, 2017; Rosales-Veitia et al., 2021). However, since 2009, the country has implemented the *Ca-*

naima Educativo Project, which integrates low-cost portable computers (Canaimitas) into various public education levels.

Caribbean states rely on support from international organizations (e.g., European Union, United Nations agencies, World Bank, and IDB) to overcome education limited budgets, implement digital solutions after emergency situations caused by natural disasters, and adapt digital content to local cultures, languages, and the national curricula.

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic

- The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated existing country and subregional differences and inequalities. Confinement and school closures during this period evidenced the need to accelerate and improve digital inclusion policies.
 - Countries like Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay were better prepared for remote education standing out in the region for “promoting the inclusion of digital technologies in their education and children’s policies”. (ECLAC, 2020:55).
 - By exacerbating existing inequalities, the pandemic also motivated targeted initiatives addressing the remote education needs of vulnerable groups. However, these initiatives were limited and mainly focused on rural areas populations and people with disabilities (Soletic and Kelly, 2022). Digital education inclusion initiatives specifically addressing RMDP, especially those in transit, relied mainly on non-state actors —NGOs, international organizations, and civil society—while governments focused on universal access policies.
 - Despite structural difficulties, the LAC region ranked well from a global perspective, with “the highest overall potential student population reach in distance learning (91%), well above the global average (69%). Potential reach was highest through television (86%) and radio (50%)” (UNESCO, 2020:101).
 - During the pandemic “out of 26 countries, 7 had learning platforms, 22 provided digital content, 13 used physical content and social media, and 20 offered education through radio or television” (UNESCO, 2020:101).
 - After DEP major boom in the COVID-19 pandemic, its centrality declined (UNESCO, 2024). However, its relevance should not be underestimated, as the widespread adoption of generative artificial intelligence in educational technologies and other areas affecting RMDP poses new ethical and political concerns in the public arena. Emerging challenges require innovative approaches, improving, updating and refining existing policies as well as co-creating new ones.
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Challenges and Opportunities of Digital Technologies for Leveraging Public Policies in Education for Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Children and Young People in LAC

Governments in LAC have expressed their commitment to digital inclusion in education²¹ and have developed advanced policy frameworks. However, greater efforts are needed “to bring about an authentic educational transformation that meets contemporary needs”. (Salvatierra and Kelly, 2023:4). IEP and DEP implementation and effectiveness face multiple policy gaps including scarcity of professional and institutional resources and capacities, cultural biases, discontinuity, fragmentation, as well as insufficient policy planning, monitoring and evaluation, especially in education during emergencies and humanitarian crises.

Digital technologies applied to learning, teaching and education management processes have the potential to strengthen education policies and have proven effective in supporting the educational inclusion of RMD CYP worldwide (UNICEF, 2024; UNESCO, 2022c; 2022d). This section explores challenges and opportunities for public policy in LAC by bridging the fields of digital education inclusion and inclusive education across five dimensions: Connectivity, Capacity, Content, Coordination and Collaboration, and Communication and Information.

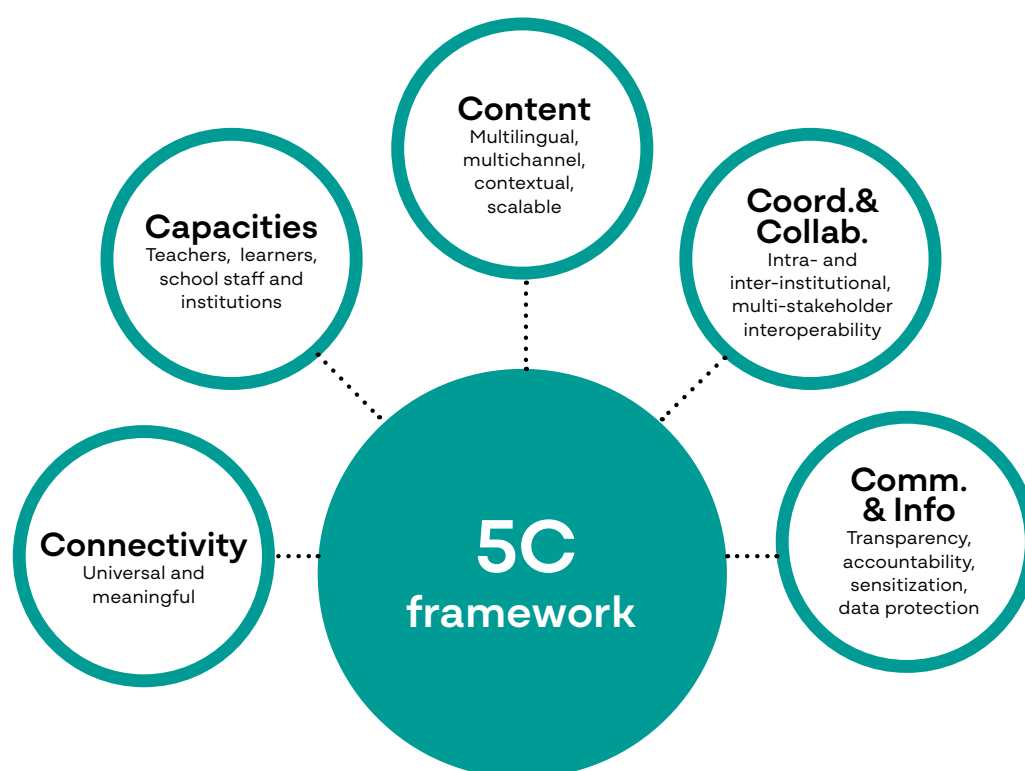


Figure 1. The 5C framework of challenges and opportunities of digital technologies for IEP of RMDP.

21 The [Declaration of Santiago](#) (2024) and the [Declaration of Buenos Aires](#) (2022) signed by Ministries of Education of LAC express governments’ commitment to ensure the right to education and digital education inclusion to all, including RMDP.

2.1. Connectivity

This key element of digital processes involves access to internet connectivity and devices across two complementary dimensions: 1) coverage for all, or universal connectivity, and 2) purpose or “meaningful connectivity, that allows users to have a safe, satisfying, enriching and productive on-line experience at an affordable cost” (ITU, 2022:2).

While LAC countries must continue to strengthen their technological infrastructure to expand broadband access and national coverage, as well as improve school connectivity, institutional frameworks, and professional capacities to ensure quality and inclusive digital education, connectivity remains a multidimensional challenge.

Various interviewees agreed that RMD CYP faced limited digital connectivity, mainly due to economic constraints limiting access to both internet services and equipment, from home-based computers (e.g., for already settled migrants), to individually owned devices and/or access to smart mobile devices. Other barriers included lack of digital skills and the challenges associated with mobility contexts, where poor Wi-Fi coverage (especially in border and rural areas) and limited access to electricity for charging devices are common issues, as mentioned by various informants consulted for this brief. Cristina Sousa from UNHCR stated:

There is a large segment of the population that we can't reach, why? Because they simply don't know how to use the basics, or their phone is not smart enough, (...) they simply don't have connectivity (...) there is only one cell phone and it belongs to the family (...) we cannot leave offline issues aside, because otherwise we risk leaving a good portion of the population behind.

When outlining strategies and initiatives for digital inclusion in education, connectivity cannot be taken for granted or treated as the main component of digital education. As evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is necessary “to recognize the specificity of an educational modality that demands, in addition to connectivity, other ways of organizing pedagogical mediation, teachers’ working conditions, teachers’ interaction, Internet use, engagement with families, student monitoring and learning assessment” (Soletic and Kelly, 2022:26).

Public internet access centers offer an alternative to bridging the digital divide, at least temporarily, by promoting physical spaces where community interaction and collaboration can flourish. During the COVID-19 health crisis, some migrant children in Bogotá, Colombia, who did not have school went to the city public libraries network, where staff helped them to print school materials and provided assistance. Vilma Gómez, from the Secretariat of Education of the District of Bogotá, Colombia, admitted that while this was an isolated initiative, it set a precedent and could become “more institutional and permanent”.

2.2. Capacities

Capacities refer to the diverse skills and knowledge that educational institutions and actors require to leverage digital tools for learning and teaching, as well as for education management. They also involve offering and experiencing safe and welcoming online and offline learning environments, prioritizing multicultural approaches as well as digital rights, data privacy and security.

Teachers and School Staff

Ensuring both digital and multicultural capacity-building for educators, teachers, principals and other school staff is essential for the effective digital and education inclusion of RMD CYP.

Digital and information literacy have become critical resources for effective teaching in the digital age (Fernández-Otoya et al., 2024). This requires continuous teacher training and engagement to ensure students have enriching digital educational experiences. However, several challenges remain, including:

- the need for **systematic approaches to conceptualizing, measuring and evaluating teachers' digital competencies**, considering "lesson planning, teaching support, classroom activities, fostering 21st-century skills, and student digital skills" (Claro et al., 2024).
- **strategic planning and resource allocation** to ensure teacher training and availability while preventing stressful situations (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, limited knowledge of RMD CYP backgrounds and profiles, time constraints and work overload). Ancell Scheker, Vice-Minister of Technical Pedagogical Services, Ministry of Education, Dominican Republic, highlighted the importance of leveraging technology in education as far as there is a clear policy framework that supports both school management and teacher training "so that they can use these resources and see them as real support and not as distractions: sometimes they feel that it overloads and complicates their work".
- **multicultural and multilingual** awareness and training initiatives are also needed, as well as the involvement of professional multidisciplinary teams specialized in socio-emotional education and psychological first aid. Informants from Costa Rica and Colombia pointed out that regulations for RMDP inclusive education are not enough if school administrators and staff are not properly sensitized to the complexities of migration of children and adolescents. Cultural bias can lead to discrimination, xenophobia and aporophobia, complicating the welcoming and integration of RMD CYP to host societies in general and educational institutions in particular.

Learners

Digital technologies can offer attractive resources and enhance motivation for learning, "because it is a very accessible language for adolescents and children", as expressed by Natalia Villalobos, consultant for an international organization working on migration. For example, digital education can enhance technical education and development of soft skills to have better opportunities in the labor market. However, she also expressed concern that without proper consideration of pedagogical and psycho-emotional factors, digital tools might "generate a lot of dependence and anxiety".

Magnone (2021) warns that too much focus on access might overshadow critical considerations related to children's rights, particularly in terms of their protection and participation in the digital space. While there are no clear protocols and standards for privacy and data security that respect the digital rights of minors (UNICEF, 2023), digital education inclusion initiatives for RMD CYP must promote critical digital literacy skills and awareness of the risks associated with the use of digital tools.

Institutions

Educational institutions have strengthened their capacities through the digitalization of various key processes, such as automated enrollment and the implementation of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS).

Digital contents and interfaces allow for massive data collection, supporting public policy monitoring, evaluation and improvement. At the same time, educational institutions require new capacities related to transparency, information access and data protection when handling sensitive data. Cabello (2021) highlights the need for accountability and access to information on public program statistics and impact indicators, as well as improved monitoring of digitalization progress and efforts to address existing deficits in public policy accountability.

2.3. Content

Digital technologies can support the creation, design and delivery of high-quality educational contents tailored to diverse educational actors and responsive to changing needs through **adaptive learning and multi-channel distribution**.

Ministries of education across the region have been active in providing online educational materials for diverse publics and purposes, including educational portals, **online repositories**, digital learning platforms, MOOCs, and Open Educational Resources (OER), among others.

Interviewees from Ecuador²² and Honduras highlighted MOOCs developed in partnership with IOM to support teachers working with migrant populations.

In Colombia, the Migration Pedagogies Team from the Secretariat of Education of Bogotá District aims to "promote spaces for dialogue, reflection, performance, always through artistic languages, so that teachers can approach migration issues in a more proactive way—through body, pedagogy, methodology, and didactics (...) It is essential to always work with the educational communities", explained team member Vilma Gómez.

In 2024, IOM Uruguay created **OER** together with the puppet company *Punchileros Títeres* that use artistic narratives as part of a didactic proposal to support the educational trajectories of children in transit. The three-chapter resources included in Ceibal's repository²³. Natalia Villalobos, from her role as a consultant at that time, highlighted the potential of OER for self-learning and for turning

22 Ecuador's teachers training platform "Me capacito", offers a specific course - *Sensibilízate*-.

23 Available at <https://rea.ceibal.edu.uy/rea/migrahistorias-capitulo-1>

transit into schooling opportunities, allowing RMD CYP to continue their learning processes. Save the Children, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education of Honduras, agreed on the importance of ensuring that both technology and content design are accessible and user-friendly addressing the specific profiles and needs of RMD CYP. They emphasized the value of engaging, culturally and contextually relevant content in multiple languages, designed for different purposes, e.g., for self-learning, integration into the national curriculum (as seen with UNICEF's Learning Passport in Honduras) or as a complementary strategy for learning recovery. Ruth Custode, UNICEF Education Regional Specialist, explained: "In the regular program, the objective is to advance and strengthen all educational topics through digital tools. In the migration context the objective is to help children retain the knowledge they already have or introduce new learning in a way that ensures they do not lose what little they have acquired during their journey".

Both UNICEF's *Learning Passport* and *Save the Children's Educational Route* initiatives have been designed to provide **scalability** - the technical ability to adapt digital content and interfaces to different contexts, leverage investments, and offer affordable solutions to diverse users, recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all solution.

For educational authorities aligning digital content with the national curriculum is crucial. Julissa Porras, Specialist of the Directorate of Regular Basic Education (DIGEBR) in Inclusion and Attention to Diversity of the Peruvian Ministry of Education, emphasized that technological interventions are more effectively adopted by educational actors when integrated into national curriculum implementation. Ancell Schecker, Vice-Minister of Technical Pedagogical Services of the Ministry of Education in the Dominican Republic, highlighted the importance of adapting technological solutions, e.g., educational platforms developed abroad, "to the context, to the language, to the curriculum" of the country.

Content delivery should ensure multiple and complementary distribution channels, both online and offline, e.g., internet, radio, TV, print materials, and other non-digital formats. This is particularly important for RMD CYP, whose unique and often shifting circumstances may limit their access to the internet and digital devices, especially while in transit.

Although the vast majority of people on the move and in host countries across the region are Spanish speakers, language diversity cannot be overlooked, as it directly impacts the educational inclusion of RMD CYP. Multilingual approaches are essential in education-related processes and resources, ranging from registration information provided on the Ministry of Education website to school interactions with non-Spanish-speaking families. Additionally allowing foreign students to do some assignments in their mother tongue acknowledges their previous knowledge and experiences, as pointed out by Evelia Romano and Lucía Baigorri, from the Spanish Second Language for Inclusion (ELSI) area of the Operational Management of Languages in Education of the Government of Buenos Aires, Argentina. While automatic translation tools can be helpful in some circumstances, the Argentinian experts warned they might lead to misunderstanding and mistrust if used in isolation, without proper guidance from intercultural mediators and professional translators. Additionally, they emphasized the potential of instant message apps like WhatsApp for the creation of reference group networks that share information and support, especially when families have just arrived in the new country.

2. 4 Coordination and Collaboration for Digital Education Governance

Digital education policies require collaboration and coordination among a wide range of stakeholders, including policy makers, academic experts, school leaders, teachers, NGOs, civil society and grassroot organizations, private companies, IT developers and, most importantly, students and their families. This involves a complex ecosystem of actors with diverse and sometimes conflicting agendas within and across national borders. This coordination enables the development of collective responses to common and complex challenges.

Even though the contribution of non-state actors is highly valued, as they deploy personnel on the ground, lead innovative solutions and guide governments on priorities and more pressing needs, ministries of education are to take the lead. Julissa Porras, Specialist of the Directorate of Regular Basic Education (DIGEBR) in Inclusion and Attention to Diversity of the Peruvian Ministry of Education, expressed that migration has a strong social base and organization in the country, which contribute to putting migration related issues on the national policy agenda.

States face multiple challenges promoting coordination and collaboration between multiple actors at various levels, (inter and intra institutional, across sectors and services) required to overcome policy gaps, discontinuities and fragmentation, enabling more coherent and sustainable initiatives.

The discontinuity of digital education policies “due to political transitions has been one of the recurrent problems in the region” (Soletic and Kelly, 2022:26), as seen in Argentina²⁴, Chile and Mexico. Policy fragmentation refers to the lack of articulation between policy levels, areas, services, data and strategies. Several informants pointed out that while national legal frameworks and public policies for the educational inclusion of RMD CYP in Latin America and the Caribbean are in place, further improvements are needed as human mobility is constantly changing, in terms of migrant flows, routes and needs, which challenge the ability of policy to timely adapt and respond to such a dynamic reality. Some of the improvements needed that could be enhanced by digital technologies include:

- **training public officers** on normative updates and innovations regarding migration and education, as well as raising awareness against racism and xenophobia.
- **strengthening states’ planning capacities** to ensure funding allocation and anticipate crisis and emergencies.
- promoting and supporting more **multi-stakeholder collaboration** for more effective digital education public policy implementation through collaborative platforms for information and knowledge sharing.
- **data interoperability** among ministries and other state entities, in order to better understand the needs of the migrant population.

24 For example, changes in government leadership and priorities following the 2024 elections in Argentina led to the reorganization of the former Ministry of Education into a Ministry of Human Capital. Among other changes, this resulted in the deactivation or suspension of several IEP and DEP initiatives developed in previous periods, such as the digital education program Conectar Igualdad and the Directorate of Collectivities, a state entity that previously supported migrant networks and information exchanges on employment, access to healthcare access and other services.

According to Marta Luzes from IDB, “more than a lack of data, there is a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Migration, for example, so that we can understand how many people are in the schools. In other words, we need to cross-reference these data with other ministries and organizations (...) there is less interoperability of their data with the rest of the state”.

The process of developing digital solutions requires interdisciplinary collaboration and evidence-gathering on the ground, almost in real time. Urbano described digital solutions as happening “in movement; it is like the migrants themselves and the migratory dynamics and flows, it is a constant reinvention” of initiatives and resources.

Save the Children works with a technology-for-development advisor and a “learning team” that systematizes lessons learnt from the organization’s pedagogical practices. This approach allows them to incorporate evidence-based knowledge into technology design. “All this design is based on the fact that we went to the border, we saw the dynamics at place, dos and don’ts, who gives their name, why they don’t give their name”, explained Susanna Urbano, referring to the Educational Route initiative²⁵. This initiative aims to collect information on the educational level of RMD CYP while moving across countries, in order to support their right to education and generate updated data for educational traceability.

Fernando Zelaya, Coordinator for the development of Digital Educational Resources of the Secretariat of Education of Honduras stressed the usefulness of inter-institutional collaboration enhanced by digital technologies, in locating and supporting returned migrant children through an early warning system based on a platform fed by diverse state and non-state entities: “NGOs, migration authorities, the Childhood Institute, who are also the ones who go around looking for the children, track their whereabouts, check whether there are reports of returned migrant children (...) [who] may not have gone through official migration channels, but have re-entered the country,” among other cases.

25 <https://www.savethechildren.es/actualidad/ruta-educativa-una-iniciativa-que-permite-que-ninos-y-ninas-continuen-aprendiendo-en-su>

2.5. Communication and Information

Digital technologies can enhance the communication and information processes of education inclusion policies.

Communication efforts range from incidence and advocacy campaigns developed by humanitarian NGOs and multilateral UN agencies —aimed to visibilize RMD CYP in transit, inform RMDP of their education rights, as well as engage states with RMDP's changing needs —to state-led strategies to sensitize civil servants, school staff and host communities about migration to foster empathy, prevent xenophobia and racism.

Cristina Sousa from UNHCR referred to “accountability to affected populations, which also includes effective, two-way, and transparent communication processes (...) empowering people so that they can speak of their rights themselves”.

Digital technologies can enhance how states communicate relevant, timely and reliable information to RMDP regarding their rights, bureaucratic procedures, host country legislation, and sociocultural specificities. Education authorities from Argentina, Costa Rica and Ecuador highlighted the importance of implementing communication actions and campaigns to inform RMDP about their rights and school enrolment processes —since many times families do not have access to timely and accurate information— and how digital technologies constitute big allies in these processes. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education website, juntos.educacion.gob.ec, disseminates explanatory videos on the enrollment process and “at the beginning of each school year we have a communication campaign that includes material for social networks. We also distribute memes through WhatsApp, which has helped us a lot because it is what people use the most”, explained María Flor Caravia, collaborator at the National Directorate of Education Regulation, Ministry of Education.

In other cases, it is necessary to raise parents' awareness about making efforts to continue their children's learning processes, even while in transit. Save the Children's Educational Routes initiative has a specific line of work to promote and carry out communication and advocacy campaigns for this purpose, as well as to inform families about the location of centers of attention, as explained by Susana Urbano. In particular, she stressed the need establish a “single map of services” to consolidate all relevant information for RMDP to avoid confusion and duplicating efforts among humanitarian actors. As an example, she noted that when migrants arrive in the Darién jungle, they find dozens of QR codes providing various types of information, often leaving them uncertain about which one they should scan.

Digital solutions have proven useful for **information management**, both within the formal public education domain, through Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), and in non-formal education initiatives, such as Educational Route and UNICEF's Learning Passport. Collection quality data on RMD CYP migrant background and educational trajectories is highly valuable to inform evidence-based public policies and enable traceability mechanisms (UNESCO, 2024a). However, when available, this information is highly sensitive and requires robust protection standards to ensure security and privacy. Additionally, information is not always used in all its potential; for example, opportunities are often missed to analyze “how educational trajectories are affected by students’

mobility or migratory status”(UNESCO, 2022e:40), losing unique opportunities for decision-making and strategic solution planning.

Save the Children aims to integrate Educational Routes with [human rights] protection and other services for children in the region. In this process, the organization takes diverse actions to protect users’ data. For example, in 2024, they planned to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with RETinternational²⁶ “for the transfer of the tool due to the issue of data protection, to ensure the co-responsibility of the use of the registry bank and to ensure the use of the data bank,” explained Susanna Urbano. She also expressed caution about offering RMDP mobile phones or mobile applications based on geolocation, as users could be easily located if the databases were hacked or improperly shared.

26 Non-profit organization that promotes humanitarian actions during emergencies, in protracted crises, and in fragile contexts to support refugees, returnees, migrants and Internally Displaced Persons, among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) must not fail the growing number of migrant, displaced, and refugee children and young people (RMD CYP). There is an urgent need to guarantee their right to quality, equitable education and digital inclusion by developing coherent and sustainable national and regional strategies that further refine, adapt and articulate existing universal access policies.

Learners' interests, rights and wellbeing must be placed at the heart of digital education inclusion policies, so that digital technologies play a supportive and complementary role in a larger education strategy based on human interaction (UNESCO, 2023).

Effective inclusive digital education policies for RMD CYP must address the multiple and overlapping challenges they face in accessing and remaining engaged in formal educational processes. By providing targeted interventions, public policy initiatives can contribute to their structural integration as well as their relational integration, fostering senses of belonging and social cohesion.

This extends to their digital inclusion in education, taking into account cultural diversity and vulnerabilities associated with human mobility, including interrupted educational trajectories, lack of economic resources to access and stay in education, cultural bias and socio-emotional difficulties, among others. Finally, inclusive digital education interventions and public policies must be framed by multicultural and human rights perspectives and be context relevant. This means being sensitive to the multiple layers at play: from individual profiles and needs, family and educational community skills and support to subregional and national sociopolitical contexts.

Public policy recommendations are structured according to a 5C framework that addresses the challenges and opportunities of digital and multicultural dimensions: Connectivity, Content, Capacity, Cooperation and Collaboration, and Communication and Information. This framework includes specific efforts to grant the education rights of RMD CYP in transit.

Connectivity

- Governments should continue strengthening digital connectivity infrastructures and accessibility, with special attention to providing meaningful connectivity in schools, rural and underserved areas, such as national borders.
- They should foresee mechanisms and resources specifically addressed to ensure meaningful connectivity for RMD CYP outside the school system, either because they are in transit between countries, migrant returnees, or dropped out from the public education system due to economic constraints, violence or other factors.

Content

- Governments should promote content design and delivery tailored to diverse RMD CYP profiles and needs, culturally and contextually relevant, in various languages, aligned with national curriculums (for students already enrolled in schools) and

cross-border educational contents including basic competencies and socioemotional support (for those with interrupted schooling while in transit).

- Content delivery should ensure multiple and complementary distribution channels, analog and digital, online and offline, in case connectivity is interrupted or not available due to lack of signal, electricity or affordable internet connection.

Capacities

- Governments should invest in human resources, ensuring digital and multicultural capacity-building for educators, teachers, principals and other school staff, as well as public officials.
- Governments should promote digital and multicultural literacy capacities to learners, their families and communities, to promote digital participation and enjoy safe learning environments both online (protection of digital rights, data privacy and security) and offline (socioemotional support, multicultural environments, respect for diversity, prevention of xenophobia, racism and bullying).

Coordination and Collaboration

- Governments should lead and promote multi-stakeholder dialogues and joint initiatives on digital education inclusion within and across the public sector (inter- and intra-institutional) and with the private sector; at the local, national and international levels to ensure interoperability, policy coherence and sustainability to avoid policy gaps, while bridging whenever possible IEP and DEP to prioritize education outcomes and RMD CYP unique and changing educational needs and experiences.
- Governments should work collaboratively towards achieving regional comprehensive policies and traceability mechanisms to recognize, validate and certify RMD students' previous knowledge and learning trajectories across borders.

Communication and Information

- Governments should actively participate in the promotion, implementation and dissemination of communication and awareness-raising campaigns on RMDP's rights, access to education and other basic services, and the prevention of racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. These campaigns should target different audiences, including RMDP, public officials, school authorities, teachers and staff to sensitize their own officials, school staff and host communities.
- Governments should take action to ensure data protection, security and privacy when managing sensitive information on RMDP, including geolocation and personal contact information.

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Annex

List of interviewees²⁷

(*)	Name	Position
NGO	Sussana Urbano Hanson	Save the Children, Senior Emergency Education Advisor for LAC and Co-coordinator of the Regional Education Group for Latin America (GRE-LAC)
IO	Daniela Uresty	UNICEF Officer, Education in Emergencies and Secretary of the GRE-LAC
	Ruth Custode	UNICEF Education Regional Specialist, Education in Emergencies/ Disaster Risk Reduction Officer, UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
	María José Velasquez	Digital education specialist at UNICEF Regional Office
	Daniel Contreras	Chief of Education, UNICEF Honduras
	Kerlyn Membreño	Education Officer, UNICEF Honduras
GOV	Fernando Zelaya	Coordinator of development of digital educational resources and administrator of the educational platforms of the Secretariat of Education of Honduras
IO	Cristina Sousa Rodriguez	Protection Associate-Community based protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
GOV	Victor Pineda Rodriguez	National Advisor. Intercultural Education Department. Ministry of Public Education of Costa Rica
IO	Natalia Villalobos	Consultant for an international organization that works on migration
GOV	Vilma Amparo Gómez Pava	Migration Pedagogies Team, Directorate of Inclusion and Integration of Populations, Undersecretariat of Quality and Relevance, Secretariat of Education of the District, Bogotá, Colombia .
GOV	Julissa Porras	Specialist of the Directorate of Regular Basic Education (DIGEBR) in Inclusion and Attention to Diversity, Vice Ministry of Pedagogical Management of the Ministry of Education, Peru .
GOV	Belén Estefanía Espín Flores	National Director of Cooperation and International Affairs of the Ministry of Education, Ecuador
	María Flor Caravía	Collaborator at the National Directorate of Education Regulation, Ministry of Education, Ecuador
	María Gloria Castro Álvarez	National Director of Education Regulation, Ministry of Education, Ecuador
	Claudia Sanchez Bastidas	National Director of Initial and Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Ecuador
GOV	Ancell Scheker	Vice-Minister of Technical Pedagogical Services, Ministry of Education, Dominican Republic
GOV	Evelia Romano	Coordinator of the Spanish as a Second Language for Inclusion (ELSI) area, Operational Management of Languages in Education (GOLE), Government of Buenos Aires, Argentina .
	Lucía Baigorri	Technical Assistant of ELSI GOLE, Government of Buenos Aires, Argentina .
IO	Marta Luzes	Specialist in the Migration Unit of the Inter-American Development Bank

(*) Type of actor abbreviations

GOV: Governmental Organization

IO: International Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

²⁷ Interviewees appear in the order in which they were interviewed chronologically.



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