Terms of Reference for the Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean: GRE-LAC

REGIONAL EDUCATION GROUP

CONTENT

PREFACE

The **Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (GRE-LAC)** was established in 2011[1] with the purpose of supporting Ministries of Education and education sector coordination mechanisms[2] in their strategies for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and emergency response, thus guaranteeing the right to education. One of its main objectives is to strengthen the coherence and articulation of these strategies at the regional level. To this end, GRE-LAC works in a coordinated and collaborative manner on key activities that contribute to an effective response.

It is part of two regional coordination mechanisms: the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC)[3] and the Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V)[4] where it acts as a forum for education in the context of the Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants (RMRP) and the Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis (RMNA).

INTRODUCTION

Different sources indicate from the evidence that disasters of natural or man-made origin, including pandemics, armed conflicts and extensive migratory flows, cause serious damage to the learning of children, adolescents and young people, as well as to the functioning of the education systems of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). consequences that are expressed when there is an inadequate management of available resources, as well as a low inclusion of the affected educational community in both formal and non-formal educational services. Hence the importance of promoting educational and planning policies that guarantee the right to education at all times, where global trends in attention to the mobile population are taken into account[5] and that promote effective guidelines to guide humanitarian action partners in the education sector. Strengthening the development of capacities, attitudes and values necessary to understand, mitigate and prevent the factors underlying disaster and crisis risk, formulating proposals for its prevention and promoting measures to reduce the vulnerability of educational communities.

In the LAC region, a focus on disaster risk management in the education sector has been promoted since the 1980s. International agencies have provided support in the implementation of activities such as drills, school emergency plans, basic equipment, physical protection and georeferencing of educational facilities, different techniques for the assessment of damage and needs; crisis intervention, training and certification of the educational community including personnel from the education systems at different levels, teachers, families and students. These activities are carried out in coordination with the authorities

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[1] Within the framework of REDLAC (Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean).

[2] It refers to active clusters, roundtables or coordination working groups that include topics related to disaster risk reduction, education in emergencies, including all those that deal with the issue of human mobility

[3] Coordination platform for disaster preparedness and response at the level of Latin America and the Caribbean, whose secretariat is assumed by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA.

[4] Regional coordination mechanism to respond to the displacement of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Latin America and the Caribbean co-led by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

[5] It refers to migrants, refugees, people in need of international protection, cross-border or internally displaced persons.

of the education sector and with the support of civil defense institutions, emergency offices, contingency and educational authorities.

GRE-LAC considers some global, regional and subregional frameworks that guide its work, among which the following stand out:

- ✔ The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ✔ The Sustainable Development Goals - 2030 Agenda
- ✔ Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Realization of SDG 4
- ✔ The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- ✔ The Paris Agreement
- ✔ The Safe Schools Declaration
- ✔ The Global Compact on Refugees
- ✔ Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
- ✔ The Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
- ✔ The Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace.

In a focused manner, we seek and promote the implementation of:

- ✔ The Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) 2022-2030 that promotes the collaboration of humanitarian actors to ensure safe, equitable and continuous access to quality education for the entire educational community. At the same time, it promotes knowledge for risk reduction and the promotion of resilience in three main pillars: 1) safer learning facilities, 2) safety and management of educational continuity and 3) education in risk reduction and resilience.
- ✔ The Global Education Cluster Strategy that promotes capacity building to coordinate education in emergencies and build increasingly prepared and resilient education systems that respond to the needs of children and adolescents by ensuring that everyone has uninterrupted, protective, inclusive and quality access to education.
- ✔ The INEE Minimum Standards include key actions and guidance notes to promote education preparedness, response and recovery in emergency situations, including disasters caused by natural hazards, conflicts and emergencies in rural and urban settings. Promoting access to and permanence of safe and relevant response opportunities to ensure accountability. There are 19 minimum standards, and they are organized into 5 areas: 1) Core standards, 2) Access and learning environment, 3) Teaching and learning, 4) Teachers and other education personnel, and 5) Education policy.

At the regional level we promote and contribute to the implementation and monitoring of:

- [The Caribbean School Safety Framework (CSSI)](#) that drives the implementation of safe schools at the national level in Caribbean countries. Initially endorsed by the *Antigua and Barbuda Declaration on* School Safety, supported by 19 countries and territories in the subregion. The implementation is led by the Ministries of Education, with the accompaniment of international, regional and national partners.
- [The declarations and roadmaps on School Safety in the SICA region,](#) which aim to monitor the progress of the subregion, as well as to promote dialogue on school safety between different key entities and foster coordination between actors and continuous exchange.
- [The Buenos Aires Declaration (2022)](#) reaffirms the commitments of the LAC Ministries of Education to reduce social and educational inequality, to continue working for the quality and relevance of education from early childhood to higher education, and to expand coverage at all levels of education.
- [The different Declarations emanating from the chapters of the Quito Process (2018)](#) that since its creation have brought together multiple countries in the region through the adoption of declarations and action plans, strengthening the humanitarian response and promoting effective coordination in the face of the migration crisis.
- [The Regional Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants (RMRP)](#) which is the strategic plan and advocacy tool coordinated by the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform (R4V). It seeks to ensure that the needs of refugees and migrants and host communities are met in different sectors, including the educational response.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission

To improve the impact of the actions carried out by the different actors in the region to strengthen risk management, preparatory actions for the reduction and response to emergency and crisis situations, including those related to human mobility, which guarantee the right to education and learning at all times and on an ongoing basis through quality educational responses, equitable, inclusive and relevant in the education sector of LAC.

Vision

Constitute a dynamic, innovative and relevant regional inter-institutional platform that supports education sectors and authorities at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, so that they can benefit from humanitarian and development actions to strengthen the resilience of education systems and services that favor the reduction of the vulnerability of children[6] and adolescents and members of education communities.

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[6] It includes those who are served through non-formal education.

PURPOSE

The Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean is the regional education sector coordination mechanism for disaster risk management and response to emergencies, including those arising from human mobility. Through a collaborative and articulated approach, the GRE-LAC promotes key strategies, activities and projects to guarantee the right to education of all children, adolescents and young people in the region, with the following objectives:

1. **Ensuring the right to education in emergency contexts**
   Ensure access to inclusive and quality education for children and adolescents affected by natural disasters, crises or emergencies of anthropic origin.
2. **Strengthening intersectoral coordination and cooperation**
   Support the articulation between educational coordination mechanisms and their linkage with other key sectors for a comprehensive and effective response to emergencies.
3. **Integrating risk management into education systems**
   Promote policies and strategies that include risk management in the curriculum, teacher training, educational infrastructure, and the empowerment of school communities.
4. **Develop strategic information tools and systems**
   Implement mechanisms for the collection, analysis and use of data for informed decision-making that contribute to the reduction of risks and the improvement of the educational response in emergencies.
5. **Encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience**
   Create spaces for dialogue, reflection, and joint action between governments, international organizations, civil society, academia, and other actors to strengthen the resilience of the education sector to crises and disasters.

OBJECTIVES

- **Strengthen capacities in risk management and educational response to emergencies:** Develop and reinforce the skills of decision-makers and educational actors in Latin America and the Caribbean for preparedness and response to emergencies, disasters and crises, fostering a culture of risk reduction and resilience in the education sector.
- **Implement actions aligned with regional and international frameworks and strategies**: Promote the execution of strategies and programs in the education sector, based on needs identified at the regional, national, and local levels, in coherence with the Work Plan of the Global Education Cluster (GEC), REDLAC, the School Safety Framework (CSSF and CSSI), the Sendai Framework, the INEE Minimum Standards, and other key initiatives.
- **Generate and share evidence for decision-making**: Promote research, collection, systematization and analysis of information on the impact of disasters and crises on education, as well as on advances in disaster risk reduction and education in emergencies, including contexts of displacement and migration crises.
- **Advocating education as a fundamental part of humanitarian response**: To make visible the impact of disasters and migration crises on the education sector and to promote its inclusion in

humanitarian policies and strategies, guaranteeing the right to education in emergencies and access to education for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

- **Ensure a rights-based and inclusive approach in all actions;** Incorporate the diversity of needs of vulnerable groups, such as girls and women, people with disabilities, early childhood, adolescents, young people, older adults, indigenous populations, LGBTIQ+ communities and other groups at risk. In addition, integrate cross-cutting issues such as gender-based violence, social risks and environmental protection.
- **Provide technical support and accompaniment to the Coordination Mechanisms and Ministries of Education:** Provide technical advice, capacity building, and direct support to the Ministries of Education and educational coordination structures to ensure access, continuity, and resilience of the education sector in the region.

LINES OF ACTION

In consensus, the members of the group have prioritized four strategic lines of action in which the actions contained in the Work Plan will be organized:

I. **CORE - Coordination**
II. **Advocacy and governance**
III. **Information Management**
IV. **Capacity building**

These axes will seek to ensure a coherent and coordinated operational response by focusing on regional and country-specific strategic support, information management, communication and resource mobilization.

The work plan will be biannual, with a mid-term review, and will include two main components:

- **Crisis and disaster risk reduction, education, preparedness and response.**
- **Educational response in contexts of human mobility.**

MEMBERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The members of this working group will include agencies, funds and programs of the United Nations System, international non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies, cooperating partners, networks, donors, research institutes, academia and other entities involved at the regional or subregional level in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response in the education sector. Each member will be represented by a primary focal point and a secondary liaison.

The GRE-LAC may consider the participation of intergovernmental agencies and bodies working on disaster risk management and/or emergency response. Membership may be made under the categories of **active member, advisor or donor**, and will be effective upon the adhesion to these Terms of Reference (TOR), Current Work Plan (WP) and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the parties.

Responsibilities of GRE-LAC members

1.1. Representation and active participation
- Designate a primary and a secondary representative.
- Actively participate in the design and execution of the work plan to fulfill the mission, vision and objectives of the GRE-LAC.
- Attend at least 80% of the regular monthly meetings.
- Participate in the annual mid-term planning and review meeting.
- Contribute to the approval of key documents for the operation of the GRE-LAC.

1.2. Coordination and strengthening of collaboration
- Effectively coordinate, provide technical support, and monitor the implementation of the work plan.
- To encourage the exchange of good practices and mutual learning between member organisations.
- Involve governmental and non-governmental counterparts in GRE-LAC initiatives.
- Promote cooperation between educational coordination mechanisms.
- Promote the participation of counterparts in educational coordination spaces.

1.3. Resource mobilization and knowledge management
- Assign human, technical and/or financial resources for the execution of the work plan.
- Collaborate in resource mobilization and fund management.
- Strengthen data collection and dialogue on public policies for educational inclusion.
- Contribute to the management of knowledge and the monitoring of information on educational emergencies.

1.4. Dialogue, communication and advocacy
- Facilitate dialogue with educational authorities and civil society.
- Disseminate GRE-LAC strategies and priorities at key meetings and events.
- Communicate progress and contributions in the internal and external spaces of the group.
- Provide information on progress in response and participation in national coordination mechanisms.

1.5. Representation and decision-making
- Represent the GRE-LAC at events and the media with the consent of the group.
- Discuss and approve new roles or responsibilities in regular or ad hoc meetings.

Responsibilities of Advisory Members and Donors

2.1. Representation and active participation
- Designate a primary and a secondary representative.
- Attend at least 50% of the regular monthly meetings.
- Actively participate in meetings and activities related to their areas of expertise within the GRE-LAC.

For advisors:
- Participate in the design and contribute to the execution of the work plan.
- Share strategies and priorities in relevant events in the region.

For donors:
- Contribute to meetings and activities related to financing and sustainability of the GRE-LAC.

2.2. Coordination and strengthening of collaboration
- Facilitate collaboration between countries and key actors on issues of interest to the GRE-LAC.
- Promote the exchange of good practices and learning.

For advisors:
- Provide technical and operational support according to their specialty.

For donors:
- Facilitate strategic alliances with key actors and ensure alignment with financing priorities.

2.3. Resource mobilization and knowledge management
- Support resource mobilization and identification of funding opportunities.
- Contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of the work plan.

For advisors:
- Offer strategic advice based on their experience.

For donors:
- Inform about calls and opportunities for educational financing.
- Explore flexible and accessible financing mechanisms.
- Ensure the monitoring and accountability of financed projects.

2.4. Dialogue, communication and advocacy
- Facilitate dialogue with key actors in the region.

For advisors:
- Disseminate and position the GRE-LAC in forums and networks.

For donors:
- Support the visibility of the GRE-LAC in high-level spaces.
- Encourage the exchange of good practices and learning.

2.5. Representation and decision-making
- Provide strategic advice on the decision-making of the GRE-LAC.

For advisors:
- Contribute technical inputs and analysis on key trends and needs in the region.
- Support the formulation of strategic recommendations for the decision-making of the GRE-LAC.

For donors:
- To guide members on available financing mechanisms.
- Provide strategic advice on the decision-making of the GRE-LAC.

New members

New members must receive a letter of invitation from the coordination and complete the form with the contact details of the people who will represent their organization within the activities of the GRE-LAC.

To be considered as a member, they must meet the following:

- **Have** a mandate and a proven track record in education and/or in areas related to disaster risk reduction, emergency response, and/or human mobility.
- **Operate** at the regional level, with a presence in at least three countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- **Be nominated** by an active member of the GRE-LAC.
- **Accept** the current ToR and WP and formalize their adhesion by signing the MoU, by the regional director or representative of the applicant organization.

Involvement of external advisors

The Regional Education Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (GRE-LAC) recognize the value that external advisors with experience and specialized knowledge in areas relevant to the Education in Emergencies agenda can provide. Their participation will be of a consultative nature and focused on specific processes where technical support is required. To this end, the following criteria are established:

- Have relevant experience and technical capabilities, previously recognized by the members of the GRE-LAC.
- Participate in a focused manner in specific topics, technical tables, or processes related to their area of expertise. The nature and frequency of the meetings in which they participate will be established on an ad-hoc basis with each advisor based on their availability, relevance and relevance
- Contribute with proposals, inputs and technical recommendations that strengthen collective work.
- Have limited voting only on matters of a technical nature, without decision-making powers in matters of coordination or governance of the group.
- Maintain coherence with the Terms of Reference and the Work Plan of the group, safeguarding the legitimacy and representativeness of the formal membership.
- Those people who have had previous experiences of participation in the GRE-LAC and who are not now linked to an organization will be positively valued.
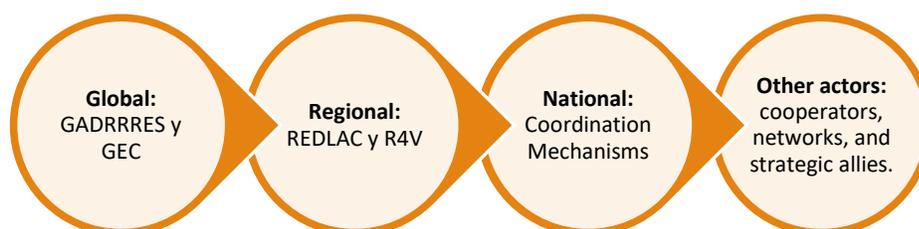
This modality will seek to enrich the collective work around the themes of the relevant topics of the group and at the same time maintain the legitimacy and representativeness of the members who actively participate in its activities.

COORDINATION

The coordination of the GRE-LAC will be in charge of UNICEF and Save the Children, in conjunction with the group's secretariat. Liability will include the following actions:

1. Representation and articulation in coordination platforms

Represent the GRE-LAC in key meetings and activities, actively participating in the working groups of regional and global inter-institutional coordination platforms. Contributing to the formulation of strategies and actions at the following levels:

Global: GADRRRES y GEC → **Regional:** REDLAC y R4V → **National:** Coordination Mechanisms → **Other actors:** cooperators, networks, and strategic allies.

Prepare reports, data analysis and reports on the state of the education sector, making sure to collect relevant information from all the group's partners, in response to the needs of platforms and key actors.

2. Monitoring and follow-up of current ToR, WP and MoU

Ensure the implementation of the established agreements, ensuring the follow-up of the commitments and responsibilities of each member. Likewise, compliance with deadlines and objectives will be monitored, promoting accountability, transparency and continuous improvement of actions.

3. Strategic Alignment and Advisory

Provide technical advice on education and support the construction of consensual positions within the group, especially in the context of regional coordination platforms, also ensuring that the GRE-LAC work plan is aligned in a coherent manner with regional strategies and objectives.

4. Communication and transparency

Keep all GRE-LAC members informed with regular and transparent updates on decisions, progress, and changes in policies and strategies.

5. Definition of individual and collective responsibilities

Establish roles and responsibilities within the group, encouraging accountability and active participation of all its members.

MEETINGS

Ordinary

Their purpose is to follow up on the actions of the current work plan, as well as to address relevant issues on the agenda of activities and events related to the GRE-LAC. They will be held remotely on the second Tuesday of each month, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. (Bogotá/Quito/Panama time zone). Attendance is mandatory for all active members.

"*Ad hoc*" or Extraordinary

They will be convened to deal with emerging issues in which the GRE-LAC has a relevant role and that cannot be addressed in the necessary depth in an ordinary meeting. They do not require the attendance of all GRE-LAC members. They will be requested by the coordination and convened by the secretariat.

"*Petit Committee*" or Technical Working Committees

These teams are formed to discuss technical aspects related to events, projects, tool development, among others. They are organized and led by the member organization responsible for the initiative, with the voluntary participation of interested members. They do not require the attendance of all GRE-LAC members.

Planning

They are organized to evaluate the progress of the actions of the GRE-LAC, reflect on priorities, challenges and contributions according to the identification of the needs of the sector and the context of the moment, and accordingly, develop or update the Work Plan, the Terms of Reference or the Memorandum of Understanding. They will be carried out within the first three months of each year. It is mandatory for all active members, advisors and donors to attend.

COMMUNICATION

Internal communication

Effective internal communication is key to the proper functioning of the GRE-LAC, as it allows coordination, exchange of information and joint decision-making among its members. To ensure fluid and transparent interaction, the main communication channel will be the monthly coordination meeting, where progress, challenges and upcoming actions will be shared.

In addition, between meetings, updates and other relevant information will be sent via email through the updated contact list, which includes the primary representative, alternate and/or person responsible for handling information in each organization. It is critical that members review these messages and share the information within their teams to ensure that all organizations are aligned with the group's work.

The GRE-LAC also has a collaboration space and cloud storage on Google Drive, where official documents and work files are located. All representatives of active organizations have editing access to this space and share responsibility for its proper use, updating and maintenance. Keeping this repository organized and up to date is essential to facilitate access to information and ensure efficient coordination.

Internal communication is a shared responsibility. For the GRE-LAC to function effectively, it is crucial that all its members are actively involved in the exchange of information, the updating of documents and participation in coordination spaces. Only through this collective commitment will we be able to strengthen our joint work and advance the group's objectives.

External communication

Members undertake to communicate the agreements, commitments, and other relevant information on the actions of the GRE-LAC within each of their organizations.

Likewise, to strengthen the visibility of the work of the GRE-LAC, they will disseminate relevant information among their national/local offices and counterparts through the different mechanisms:

Monthly Newsletter

- GRE-LAC will produce a monthly newsletter coordinated by the Interagency Network for Education in Emergency Situations (INEE) in the Spanish-speaking community.
- The coordination of the bulletin will ensure that an editorial line aligned with the mission, vision and objectives of the GRE-LAC will be ensured; as well as balancing the topics, organizations and type of content in each publication.
- The newsletter will disseminate content published or produced by member organisations but also any content relevant to the education sector in the humanitarian field. On a monthly basis, the coordination of the bulletin, with the support of the group's secretariat, will compile among the members of the group the relevant content to be disseminated in this space.
- All members of the GRE-LAC will be responsible for dissemination to their most relevant contact lists and/or national and regional offices.

Websites and social networks

The GRE-LAC will disseminate its actions and relevant information (educational resources, courses & events, news and calls) in the official online communication spaces:

1. Official website of the GRE-LAC, designed to promote the dissemination of strategies and tools oriented towards the mission, vision and objectives of the GRE-LAC.
2. Official GRE-LAC website on Relief Web, the humanitarian information portal managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
3. The reach of the public on social networks will be done through a communication strategy that identifies the target audience and the benefits of dissemination for each space on the active platforms. The members of the GRE-LAC will be responsible for providing information to feed these networks and share in the networks of their organizations the broadcast content to support the dissemination of the group's actions.

COORDINATION MECHANISMS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The GRE-LAC will support the strengthening of coordination mechanisms in the education sector of the Latin American and Caribbean region, including clusters, working groups and groups established to respond to humanitarian actions.

To carry out this task, three annual meetings will be organized to address issues of interest to all relevant agents in the region with the aim of opening a space for communication and collaboration that will strengthen the quality of responses in the educational context and regional coordination.

REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

These ToRs must be approved by at least 80% of the active members and must be reviewed and adjusted periodically, in particular when a specific need or change in the situation of the context determined in the plenary of the GRE-LAC and based on the evidence generated in the region is recognized.