



# Manifiesto for Quality Education

Ecuador 2022

With the support of:



# Manifiesto for Quality Education of the Because I am a Girl Movement

The Because I am a Girl Movement, based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular on Sustainable Development Goal 4, and on the purposes and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, which recognize education as a Fundamental Human Right, a global public good and a public responsibility, we advocate the need for access to quality education. We understand education as an integral process, with an intersectional, intersectoral, and transversal approach, based on the principles of human rights, sustainable development, gender equality, inclusion, equity and solidarity in all its actions to transform education and its systems at national, local and community levels.

The National Education System still faces some challenges because it does not cover all groups, especially students belonging to indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples and nationalities. In 2020, school closures affected approximately 4.4 million students in Ecuador, the most affected being children and adolescents with disabilities, those living in poverty, refugees and migrants<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, during 2020, only 6 out of 10 children nationwide had access to the Internet in urban areas, and only 3 out of 10 had access in rural areas<sup>2</sup>. The lack of connectivity during the pandemic was one of the main barriers to accessing education. This academic year, approximately 1,777,282 students were enrolled in the Sierra and Amazon regions, a significant decrease in relation to the figures for the previous academic year, when there were approximately 1,833,957 students; that is, 56,675 fewer students. Migration, child labor and school exclusion, which result in the abandonment of the educational process, are the main causes of the reduction in the student population.<sup>3</sup>

As is well known, education is the gateway to a dignified life because it creates more rights and freedoms, since it helps us to break and question patterns that have replicated models of inequality in our society for years, but more importantly, it allows us to propose new options to confront and put an end to these patterns. For girls and women, barriers such as gender-based violence limit their full right to education and in crisis situations exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities. Experiences of violence can have immediate and long-term implications for girls' and adolescents' learning and well-being. Therefore, as holders of the right to education, we call on the State and the governing body of national education policy, namely the Ministry of Education of Ecuador and the other key decision makers in guaranteeing the right to education, to commit themselves to the execution of the following requests, which we consider are indispensable when speaking of quality and warmth education, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic and the Organic Law of Intercultural Education:

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<sup>1</sup> World Vision (2021) Diagnosis on the situation of the rights of children and adolescents in Ecuador.

<sup>2</sup> World Vision (2022) 10 surprising statistics about technology and education. <https://blog.worldvision.org.ec/10-estadisticas-sorprendentes-acerca-de-la-tecnologia-y-la-educacion#:~:text=6%20de%20cada%2010%20ni%C3%B1as,abril%202020%20Dabril%202021>

<sup>3</sup> Castillo, L. (2022) There are 56 675 fewer students this school year in the Sierra and Amazon regions. El Comercio. <https://www.elcomercio.com/tendencias/sociedad/estudiantes-menos-anio-lectivo-sierra-amazonia.html>

1. *Urge* the democratization of knowledge, pedagogy and learning, improving curricula that eliminating colonialism, racism, misogyny and other discriminatory attitudes, and recognize the value of indigenous and local knowledge.
2. *Insist* on investing in the strengthening of gender transformative education to change discourses of inequality and promote equity in order to create a feminist present and future that is just and free of harmful gender stereotypes.
3. *Encourage* the promotion and support of academic freedom, fostering education that stimulates critical thinking, imagination, communication, innovation, and socio-emotional and interpersonal skills through the creation of true learning communities and free of violence, promoting egalitarian dialogue for decision making and conflict resolution.
4. *Urge* that all necessary measures be taken to ensure safe learning environments for the educational community, including face-to-face and online learning that is free from harassment, bullying, violence (physical, sexual, psychological and gender-based), discrimination, racism, sexism, xenophobia, and discrimination based on disability and age.
5. *Demand* the allocation of resources for the comprehensive protection of all children and young people, especially girls and young women, students with disabilities, young people belonging to peoples and nationalities, adolescents deprived of liberty, in situations of illness, and in conditions of mobility, in order to protect the trajectories and educational continuity of groups of people in vulnerable situations, while ensuring the proper implementation of effective inclusive strategies to ensure the completion of the educational process.
6. *Urge* the investment in effective security plans in collaboration with other State portfolios to protect the physical integrity of the student population during their journey from their homes to their schools. To this end, we need safe environments free of dangers, especially those faced by girls and female adolescents.
7. *Demand* that the quality of education at all levels be improved, ensuring access, permanence and completion. In particular, we call for attention to be paid to children in their early stages to ensure that all children have access to the national education system from the initial stage in order to prevent the increase in illiteracy rates, thus ensuring that all children can learn to read, write and use basic mathematics in a timely manner.
8. *Demand* that teachers be provided with relevant and quality training, professional development opportunities, and the necessary facilities and resources for their work, decent working conditions, and an innovative, safe, and rewarding environment.
9. *Insist* on the implementation of fair, equitable, non-discriminatory and democratic mechanisms for the recruitment of qualified teachers, in particular to ensure that those belonging to historically excluded communities, such as teachers belonging to indigenous peoples and nationalities, are recruited.
10. *Urge* investment in educational digital infrastructure to provide accessible, dignified, safe and stable connectivity for all students in order to facilitate the teaching-learning process and to close the digital divide.
11. *Call* for more funds to be allocated for the development of education action plans to respond promptly and with absolute priority in times of emergency, without affecting the quality and continuity of the educational process, prioritizing humanitarian aid, public funding for immediate responses, etc., in the areas and territories affected by the emergency, until all children and young people, but especially girls and young women, have equitable access to quality education, even in times of crisis.

12. *Demand* that the provision of comprehensive and quality sexual education be guaranteed for the student community inside and outside of schools through a readjustment of the current educational curriculum, promoting education in values, harmonious coexistence, and correct information in related subjects, with the purpose of protecting the sexual and reproductive rights of the student community.
13. *Request* that pregnant adolescents and breastfeeding teenage mothers have access to quality education without discrimination and in a safe and respectful environment by the whole educational community.
14. *Invite* directors, teachers and members of the DECE (Student Counseling Department), to be trained in routes and protocols of action in situations of violence, without gender bias and taking into account the principle of the best interest of the child.
15. *Insist* that children and adolescents who have been excluded for various reasons and those who are outside the national education system be investigated in order to achieve their effective and immediate inclusion.

Those of us who make up the "Because I am a Girl" Movement, based on the principles established in our organization and by virtue of our legitimate right to participation, which has enabled us to demonstrate, through our work, the challenges faced by children and adolescents in Ecuador, commit ourselves to the following:

1. *Reaffirm our conviction with regard to the importance* of closing the historical gaps in the political participation of girls, adolescents and young women through specific strategies in which they are the ones who lead the organization and the actions that are promoted and implemented.
2. *Reaffirm the conviction* to uphold the rights of girls, adolescents and young women, and to promote gender equality in all spheres in Ecuador.
3. *Advocate* for the voices and demands of children and youth, especially girls and adolescent women, to be incorporated in all decision-making bodies and at all levels of advocacy: from families and communities to formal spheres of power (parishes, municipalities, state portfolios and their decentralized units, National Assembly, Constitutional Court, international human rights committees, among others).
4. *Challenge* gender stereotypes that produce and replicate patterns of inequality and change social norms to build a society that is more just, supportive, inclusive and free of discrimination and violence.
5. *To be* close observers and provide exhaustive follow-up to each of the aforementioned requests, in order to achieve a more equitable and just State for children, adolescents and youth of Ecuador, in which the principles of celerity, absolute priority and the best interest of the child govern every decision taken.

We are a movement made up of girls, boys, adolescents and young people who are aware of the challenges that Ecuador faces on the path towards quality education for all, so we are committed to working together with those responsible for ensuring our rights, to remain expectant and vigilant that the State acts and responds to the needs expressed in this manifesto, and to form an intergenerational team of people who strive for quality education.