

CASE STUDY

Improving Learning among Indigenous Girls and Boys in Peru through Intercultural Bilingual Education:

A Case Study of the Ucayali Region

I. ISSUE/BACKGROUND

Peru has improved access to education. As reflected in low student learning achievements (LLECE, 2006), the quality remains nevertheless low. Indigenous students in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged. Although Peru recognizes that intercultural bilingual education (IBE) is the most appropriate model for indigenous students, only 13% have access.

A case in point is the Ucayali region where an estimated 13% of children, aged 3 to 16 years old, are indigenous. More than 20% of indigenous children are out of school. An additional 24.4% children living in rural areas are in a lower grade than they should be, increasing the risk of early drop out (UNICEF, 2013).

Peru is a multicultural and multilingual country, with more than 45 spoken languages. Out of the approximate 8 million Peruvian children between the ages of 3 and 16, at least 11% speak an indigenous language (National Official Government Statistics).

II. RATIONALE

Statement of the problem: Indigenous girls and boys in Ucayali have low learning results.

Objective: To improve learning among the most excluded students, indigenous girls and boys in the Amazon region of Ucayali, by strengthening IBE

Theory of Change: To improve learning outcomes, indigenous children must be provided with a curriculum that is relevant and is taught in their mother tongue. This improves their self-esteem, strengthens their cultural identity and cultivates basic personal skills. The IBE model achieves this by providing bilingual instruction, in the student's mother tongue and the National pre-dominant language (*in the case of Peru, Spanish*). It also incorporates indigenous knowledge, practices and values.

Education programmes supported by UNICEF address the main obstacles to effectively implement IBE. Access to quality IBE and better student learning will augment by improving teacher education with regard to IBE; developing culturally relevant curricula and learning materials; increasing participation among communities, families and students; strengthening governance among local education authorities and schools, including in relation to the use of disaggregate data and budgeting.

Expected Results: Indigenous Ashaninka and Shipibo girls and boys from Ucayali will improve their learning results through increased access to quality IBE schools.

Time frame:

2007 – 2010 Initial phase: development of necessary conditions through advocacy and capacity development

2011 – 2013 Second phase: implementing IBE as a national and sub-national policy

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III. STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

UNICEF encourages a multipronged approach to implement its education strategy.

Advocacy with regional authorities and the Office of the Ombudsman led to an analysis of the education rights of indigenous children. This resulted in IBE being identified as policy priority in 2008 and incorporated as a major plan in the Regional Education Medium Term Plan (MTP).

Capacity development aimed at authorities, teacher educators, principals and teachers addressed **technical aspects of IBE** (e.g., curricula development, adaptation/training on student learning achievement tests in indigenous languages); **governance** (e.g., decentralized education management, results-based planning and budgeting, and enhanced participation); as well as **monitoring and evaluation** (e.g. the better use of disaggregated data and the creation of a set of indicators to track progress).

Partnerships were established with regional education authorities, teacher educators, principals, teachers, NGOs, indigenous groups as well as individual Ashaninka and Shipibo families and children. This enhanced **participatory decision-making, local ownership** and **monitoring** of progress in the implementation of IBE policy.

IV. RESOURCES REQUIRED/ALLOCATED

UNICEF Peru facilitates specialized technical assistance, training, cash assistance and provision of key supplies for the strategic results identified in the project. The entire IBE program has been funded by the Finnish and the Canadian Governments and the Spanish Committee.

Human Resources: Education Officer, 8 consultants.

Financial Resources: USD\$ 2 394 000 for the 2007 – 2013 period (approximately USD\$ 300 000 per year)

V. PROGRESS AND RESULTS

Comprehension scores of Ashaninka and Shipibo students showed improvement year after year. Those scores are measured the learning test that the Regional Education Office of Ucayali and UNICEF-Peru developed. These are learning achievement tests offered in the mother tongue of the students.

Regional Evaluation Results in Reading Comprehension in Shipibo and Ashaninka as a mother tongue: 4th grade primary level students

4th Grade student results in reading comprehension	Shipibo students (%)			Ashaninka students (%)		
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012
Level 2 ¹	3,6	6,1	12,7	2,5	7,0	11,2
Level 1	45,2	53,4	61,1	46,0	43,3	44,4
Below Level 1	51,3	40,4	26,2	51,6	49,8	44,4

The successful experience from Ucayali has had an impact at the national policy level since many of the tools and strategies developed for that region have been incorporated into the Peruvian education

¹ This is the level that is expected to be attained by 4th grade students.

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policy and planning. For example, the in-class training model for IBE teachers has been expanded to schools in other remote indigenous areas as has the participatory model of IBE curriculum development, which directly involves indigenous peoples. In addition, the involvement of indigenous representatives in education bodies has been accepted as a good practice and regional reading comprehension tests offered in indigenous languages are widely used.

VI. LESSON LEARNED

An adequate combination of **advocacy** at the highest possible political level, technical assistance and **capacity development** of duty bearers (i.e. to improve the technical aspects of IBE as well as governance) and of rights holders (i.e., to increase demand and follow-up for IBE) are all key aspects of policy design and reform. Perhaps the most important element to guarantee ownership and sustainability is the promotion of **innovation** and change within State structures, including, for example, the use of student learning assessments in indigenous languages.

Another important innovation is the collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to set quality standards for IBE schools. Capacity building strategies include the systematic incorporation of indigenous professionals and community members in all education events and in the decision making process for a school's curriculum, learning material and development tests. They have a better understanding on indigenous knowledge and values systems and on how indigenous children learn. UNICEF contributes to the creation and review of a national and regional inventory of IBE schools and IBE teachers. It also work on the production and strategic use of key disaggregated statistical data on the demand and supply of IBE. Recently, there has been an increase in public investment in IBE though regional public investment projects.

Six years later, Ucayali is still one of the best examples of the successful implementation of IBE policy at the local level. Its sustained impact is the result of the institutional and professional capacity building during the initial stage of the implementation as well as the broad-based involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous children, families, organizations and the Office of the Ombudsman. In consequence, IBE has gained a solid footing within the structures of the education system in Ucayali. Furthermore, it is widely recognized as the most relevant education programme to guarantee the right to education among indigenous children.

One of the challenges remained the high staff turnover among sub-national governments. This was overcome through continuous capacity development provided largely through partnerships with local universities. Further potential obstacles were political instability and weak institutional capacity. These were overcome through capacity development in combination with effective monitoring and evaluations (M&E), which generated a solid evidence base that showed the effectiveness of IBE schools. In order to ensure that Intercultural Bilingual Education is recognized as a national education policy and priority, IBE needed to be identified as a fundamental right that had to be fulfilled and defined as an essential service for all indigenous girls and boys. Both Indigenous Organizations and the Office of the Ombudsman have played a key role in positioning the right of indigenous children to education. Their support has been pivotal in bringing legitimacy to the process of IBE implementation.

VII. MOVING FORWARD

Although there is still a long way to go to ensure high quality education for indigenous children in Peru, UNICEF is focusing its efforts to support the Peruvian Ministry of Education to expand the Ucayali experience into a national policy. More specifically, UNICEF Peru is working with the government to formulate and implement the National IBE Strategic Plan. Particular attention will be given to

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strengthening the capacity of regional and local education authorities, principals, teachers and others to assume the new responsibilities inherent in the expansion of IBE.

One of the strengths of the education programmes supported by UNICEF is that they operate within government structures at the national, regional and local levels. This positioning has enabled UNICEF to contribute the Peruvian Government's decision to make IBE a national educational policy priority for the first time. Its close collaboration and broad-based participatory approach to policy design and implementation will help support both expansion and sustainability. Also promising is that Peru is in a period of sustained macroeconomic growth, meaning that it has the resources necessary to invest in education policy. Overall, this combination of political will and increased resources is a historical opportunity that cannot be missed. The experiences from Ucayali in decentralization and Intercultural Bilingual Education are likely relevant to other countries with indigenous populations.