

A blue-tinted photograph of a woman in profile, looking down at a baby she is holding. The baby is wearing a white headband with a bow. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

# CONFERENCE: REGIONAL NETWORK TO MEASURE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Advances Made in the Agenda for Measuring Early  
Childhood Development in Latin America

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**FEBRUARY 2022**

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First Edition

Inter-American Dialogue

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Regional Network to Measure Childhood Development (REMDI in Spanish)

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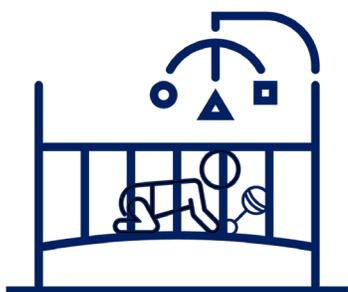
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## INTRODUCTION

On September 29 and 30, 2021, the Regional Network to Measure Childhood Development – Advances Made in the Agenda for Measuring Early Childhood in Latin America Conference was held remotely. It was organized by the Regional Network to Measure Childhood Development also known as REMDI, for its acronym in Spanish (Red Regional de Medición del Desarrollo Infantil), with the support of the Inter-American Dialogue, the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture (OEI), and the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN). This conference brought together authorities, public officials, decision-makers, and academics linked to early childhood development in countries of the region. The document presented below summarizes the ideas and experiences shared during the conference.



REMDI is a regional network created in May 2019, comprised of specialists who seek to promote and facilitate current and future measuring efforts so that all Latin American and Caribbean countries have clear and technically sound mechanisms available for evaluating early childhood development at the national level. This allows for comparisons among countries and population subgroups within a country. In September 2016, a regional meeting was held in the city of Lima, Peru to build a common framework for the creation and use of early childhood development assessment results. Based on this, in Bogota, Colombia, in 2017, leaders from 22 countries in the region signed the Regional Agenda for Early Childhood Development, which emphasizes the importance of having systems that measure childhood development that can serve as a basis for creating action plans and programs. Then, in Montevideo, in May 2019, a meeting was held, that created an opportunity to focus on technical and institutional aspects, highlighting the lessons learned on how to implement national systems for measuring early childhood development. The Montevideo group decided to establish a common platform to advance on a shared agenda to measure development agenda. This is how REMDI was established - made up of members of governments, academia, non-governmental organizations and international organizations. Currently, the four governments of the region that are part of the REMDI council are Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay<sup>1</sup>. The latter has assumed the secretariat position of the network through the Uruguay Crece Contigo initiative.

The main purpose of this conference, the first to be organized by the network, is to share experiences and reflections regarding the regional progress, lessons learned and challenges of measuring early childhood development, monitoring the agenda promoted in recent years, as well as the emerging challenges given the context of the pandemic and the recovery process associated with it. In this knowledge-sharing space, various Latin American countries shared reflections and experiences obtained by teams specializing in measurement tools, paying special attention to the pending and emerging challenges inherent to the context of recovery after the pandemic. This space also highlighted the importance of achieving substantial progress towards a permanent, pertinent, timely, and sustainable strategy for measuring early childhood that can inform decision-making and the deployment of actions related to the implementation of effective early childhood programs and policies in the region.

The conference was well attended, with participation of over 1,342 people attending remotely via Zoom on the first day and 1,077 on the second day. Also, the video for the first day of the conference has over 4,099 views and the video for the second day has over 1,488 views on the YouTube channel of the Inter-American Dialogue<sup>2</sup>.

**REMDI is comprised of specialists who seek to promote and facilitate current and future measuring efforts in Latin American and Caribbean countries.**



### The specific objectives of the conference were:

1. Strengthen REMDI's work by:
  - Reviewing and presenting the progress of the agendas of the countries that comprise it,
  - Strengthening the relationship with allies and academic networks, and
  - Expanding REMDI by incorporating new actors into the network.
2. Promote a space for reflection in the region to agree on a joint agenda with a common framework for measuring development, that allows for monitoring and comparing indicators.
3. Contextualize the challenges and lessons learned in measuring early childhood development during the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic.

Below is a synthesis of the main observations presented over the two days. The details of the various presentations and the core ideas discussed during the conference are accessible later in this document.

## Main messages

The conference strengthened REMDI's relationship with stakeholder countries, allied institutions, and relevant actors in academia, constructing a space for broad participation. This space made it possible to review and share the progress of our agenda, especially highlighting valuable lessons learned from the countries that make up REMDI and broader experiences in the region. With this framework in mind, we can highlight that:

- REMDI plays a relevant role in contributing to the promotion and progress of the agendas for measuring early childhood development within its member countries, as well as in those who participate in its meetings or who benefit from its work.
- It is useful to have the information and experiences generated from the surveys carried out in the region, as well as the analysis of lessons, challenges, and strategies associated with their design and implementation in the countries themselves. REMDI plays a relevant role in facilitating this horizontal learning exchange.
- Based on the progress made by the countries in their efforts to consolidate evaluation agendas, the following elements stand out:
  - a) Measuring development must be understood as a state policy, which goes beyond the actions of individual governments. This facilitates the continuity and sustainability of evaluations.
  - b) Consolidating evaluation efforts that arise in the various countries is essential to facilitate the stability of technical teams and strengthen their capacities. The region has been gradually building valuable human capital in this area.
  - c) Measurement results are considered key inputs for the design and management of public policies for impacting development childhood conditions and the fulfillment of children's rights. They should, therefore, be at the center of the design of development actions promoted in the countries.

d) Likewise, these measurements also provide relevant input for a set of diverse actors, such as academia and civil society, therefore it is necessary to advance and consolidate data availability and improve the strategy for sharing results. This also requires ensuring the transparency of the various processes and stages involved in the design and implementation of measuring development, considering the broad spectrum of stakeholders.

e) Constructing and promoting inter-institutional alliances, along with the development and implementation of evaluations facilitates the sustainability and prioritization of their financing. We recognized that the financial sustainability of evaluations is a permanent challenge for the countries of the region.

f) The most consolidated evaluation experiences in the region have in common the strengthened and institutionalized participation of actors - from academia, civil society, private agencies, and international cooperation - in the design and implementation of their evaluation agendas, with plans for extensive use of the data. This participation of actors has allowed, in turn, to deepen the complexity of the evaluation tools; give greater relevance to the dimensions and methodological strategies; increase transparency in the various processes involved and the credibility of the results; allow for articulated action among actors; expand political and technical support for the sustainability of measurements efforts; and ensure greater effectiveness in the investment that implies the measuring development strategies. This will generate relevant evidence for the fulfillment of multiple objectives.

g) The participation of civil society actors and non-governmental organizations plays an important role in establishing links between the State and citizens. The involvement of these actors in measuring processes allows adjustments to be made in their design, considering new perspectives and a greater understanding when reading the data. Additionally, this integrates considerations for various contexts and needs of the target population. As a result, this collaboration becomes a valuable opportunity to improve the relevance of the instruments created, monitors and holds accountable governments as well as strengthen dissemination strategies and messages of the results generated.

h) As long as the data obtained is relevant and useful for various purposes, there will be interest in continuing to measure development, regardless of their potential lack of sustainability or the political contexts in which they are developed.

i) The role of academia in the production, understanding, and dissemination of results allows for important contributions to be made for the evaluation agenda, such as:

- Academia can support implementing teams or decision makers by facilitating and sharing evidence to inform decision-making.
- Academia serves an advocacy function for political actors and legislators due to the evidence-based research that they conduct that is of great interest to these stakeholders. This results in an opportunity to promote an adequate prioritization of the childhood agenda, facilitating budget allocations, the development of legislative initiatives or institutional and public policy improvement.
- To ensure an effective collaboration between academia and technical and political actors, it is essential that the results of this collaboration can influence decision-making.

j) Coordination among the various actors that encompass an integrated evaluation agenda is a task that requires the joint work of all those involved and exceeds the exclusive responsibility of the main coordinating entity. It is therefore essential to define the primary institutions responsible for measuring efforts that can exercise appropriate leadership, promote articulation among sectors, and is a technically and politically recognized interlocutor due to the diversity of actors.



**It is useful to have the information and experiences generated from the surveys carried out in the region, as well as the analysis of lessons, challenges, and strategies associated with their design and implementation in the countries themselves. REMDI plays a relevant role in facilitating this horizontal learning exchange.**

Regarding advances made towards strategies for measuring development that allow for monitoring and comparability of indicators in the region, the main messages of the conference were that:

- The experiences of the countries reveals the importance of uniquely identifiable data. This allows experts to cross-check results with the administrative databases or other available measurement instruments which enables expanding the understanding of the analyses. Likewise, it eases the creation of the instruments, extracting information of interest from administrative bases, and potentially allowing longitudinal monitoring of population cohorts.
- On the other hand, the use of administrative data constitutes a great opportunity for the construction of information systems for alerting and monitoring childhood development. For this reason, advancing in the creation and consolidation of quality administrative records opens up a relevant development opportunity for the evaluation agendas and the information systems that accompany the management, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and policies for children.
- The use of indicators from globally used instruments enables comparability among countries. In this sense, the effort to build instruments such as the Global Scale for the Evaluation of Early Childhood Development (GSED) stands out as an example.
- Having measurement tools that have a culturally appropriate focus is recognized as a complex but necessary challenge. For this, the instruments used must have complied with various stages of review and requirements that allow their effective adaptation and alignment with respect to the normative frameworks and cultural or linguistic particularities of the countries that wish to implement them.
- Measuring development tools that have the objective of screening and linking individual care to children are relevant types of instruments that inform the actions that service providers develop with them and their families. This is especially beneficial when the health and education sectors use common instruments that allow synergy and consistency in the services provided to children and families. The suggestion is to strengthen the development of competencies in the intervention teams, not only for the correct application of this type of instruments, but especially for the interpretation and use of the results as a basis for the orientation of individual intervention plans.
- When evaluations seek to determine the effect of the interventions, the instruments selected and the data collection methodologies must effectively enable experts to distinguish whether the results obtained can be attributed to the intervention being measured. To this end, control groups are essential.
- Another outstanding element includes ensuring that possible conflicts of interest of the parties involved are transparent in the development phase of the evaluations, considering that sometimes there are links between the researchers and the groups that handle the licenses of specific instruments, which could affect the transparency of the decisions.

Regarding the challenges and lessons learned from measuring early childhood development in times of Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic, experts agreed on the relevance of resuming services and measuring efforts. The available information indicates that the pandemic has had negative effects on the development, health, and well-being of children and has worsened the problems related to social contexts that affect many children, such as poverty and inequity. Given this, it is urgent to have accurate information that allows recalibrating efforts and informing recovery actions. In this regard, it was noted that:

- The pandemic, and its effects on early childhood development, must be understood from multiple perspectives that allow us to account for the complexity of the profound inequities of the Latin American and Caribbean reality.
- However, lessons learned from the evaluation efforts conducted during the pandemic has led to the development of measuring instruments for use in emergency contexts, where the best possible evaluation tools are short-duration and virtual.
- Given that the crisis altered the allocation of resources, jeopardizing the continuity of progress in the evaluation agendas in some countries, it was considered relevant to summarize these information sharing efforts that had been previously developed.

Lastly, the objectives set by REMDI for this conference include: expanding the network that comprises it and incorporating new countries. In this regard, it is important to note that the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and El Salvador have expressed their interest in joining REMDI based on the exchange generated during this event.



## AGENDA REGIONAL PARA EL DESARROLLO INTEGRAL DE LA PRIMERA INFANCIA

# AGENDA

*Online Conference: Regional Network to Measure Childhood Development - Advances Made in the Agenda for Measuring Early Childhood Development in Latin America*

September 29 and 30, 2021

FIRST DAY		
TIME	SCHEDULE	PANELISTS / MODERATOR
9:00 - 9:05 AM	(1) Opening Remarks Presentation of the Conference's Objectives	Presentation: Ariel Fiszbein - Inter-American Dialogue
9:05 - 9:30 AM	(2) Introduction to the Regional Network to Measure Childhood Development (REMDI in Spanish) Purpose, progress, and challenges faced by REMDI, an open invitation to the entire region.	Panelist: Cecilia Sena - Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) - Uruguay
9:30 - 10:30 AM	(3) First Session: Early Childhood Development and National Statistical Systems - Where Do We Stand? A discussion with authorities in the statistical field. Uneven progress and the urgency to accelerate the agenda in times of pandemic: What have we learned and what should we do to measure early childhood development?	Juan Daniel Oviedo - National Statistics Administration Department (DANE) - Colombia. Teresa Shamah - National Institute of Public Health (INSP) - Mexico. Fiorella Di Landri - National Institute of Statistics (INE) - Uruguay Roxana Muñoz, Assistant Secretary of Childhood. Ministry of Social Development and Family - Chile. Moderator: Horacio Coral - National Statistics Administration Department (DANE) - Colombia.
10:30 - 11:30 AM	(4) Second Session: How Does Academia Contribute to the Advancement of the Agenda? Based on experiences, how do we promote advocacy from academia: main messages regarding what, how and when to use evidence and information to inform policies?	Paula Bedregal - School of Medicine, Pontificia Universidad Católica - Chile Antonio Rizzoli - Hospital Infantil of Mexico Federico Gómez Tiago Munhoz - UFPEL - Epidemiological Research Center Moderator: Jeanet Leguas - Chile Crece Contigo - Chile
11:30 - 12:00 PM	(5) Third session: Advances in GSED as a Regional Instrument. What is the Global Agenda for Measuring Early Childhood Development among the Youngest Children?	Michelle Pérez - presents as a representative of the GSED Introduction by Brenda González - SIPINNA - Mexico
12:00 - 12:05 PM	(6) Closing Remarks and Invitation to Attend the Conference the Next Day.	Brenda González - SIPINNA - Mexico

**SECOND DAY**

TIME	SCHEDULE	PANELISTS / MODERATOR
9:00 - 9:05 AM	(7) Opening Remarks Opening remarks and presentation of objectives and structure of the second day.	Horacio Coral - National Statistics Administration Department (DANE) - Colombia REMDI
9:05 - 10:00 AM	(8) First Session: Impacts of the Pandemic on Early Childhood Development: Implications and Urgencies for Measuring Development in the Short- and Medium-Term. First expert - What Do We Know about the Situation of Children During the Pandemic and What Challenges Do We Have at the Regional and Global Level? Second expert - How to Measure Strategies and Experiences in this Context. What Do We Know About Evaluation Challenges in this Period?	First expert: Raúl Mercer (FLACSO) - Argentina Second expert: Gabriela Guerrero (GRADE) - Peru Moderator: Mónica Rubio (UNICEF LACRO)
10:00 - 11:00 AM	(9) Second Session: Governance and Development of Institutional Capabilities for Measuring Childhood Development. Presentation 1: How to achieve / strengthen intersectoral coordination when it comes to measuring development? Presentation 2: Institutional and human resource capacity. Presentation 3 - Achieving financial sustainability. Presentation 4 - How do changes in the periodicity and institutional frameworks affect surveys? How to ensure the sustainability of financing?	Presentation 1: ENDIS - Giorgina Garibotto, Director of Management and Knowledge Generation Division of Uruguay Crece Contigo (MIDES) - Uruguay Presentation 2: ELCO - Horacio Coral (DANE) - Colombia Presentation 3: ELPI - Jenny Encina - Social Observatory - Ministry of Social Development and Family - Chile Presentation 4: Argelia Vásquez - National Institute of Public Health (INSP) - Mexico. Moderator: Gabriela Sánchez (OEI) - Chile
11:00 - 12:00 PM	(10) Last Panel of the Conference (Closing) Political Commitment and Public Policy Actions to Support Childhood Development through Informed Decision-Making. How to Advance Significantly in the Region? Barriers and Challenges for Permanent and Quality Evaluation. Review of challenges, commitments, final statement and closing.	Martín Lema - Minister (MIDES) - Uruguay Patricia Muñoz - Defender of the Childhood - Chile Carolina Salgado - Presidential Advisor for Children and Adolescent Matters - Colombia Moderator: Ariel Fiszbein - Inter-American

# SYNTHESIS OF THE PRESENTATIONS

*FIRST DAY / September 29, 2021*

## **I. Opening remarks and presentation of the conference objectives**

Led by Ariel Fiszbein, Director of the Education Program of the Inter-American Dialogue, the opening remarks synthesized the work achieved by REMDI in the last two years since its inception and highlighted that this virtual conference is a space that advances the work of the network, through knowledge-sharing, lesson learning and seeking collective solutions. Cecilia Sena, National Director of Social Development in the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay (MIDES in Spanish) spoke about the purpose, progress, and challenges faced by REMDI as a network that serves the entire region. She highlighted the new challenges that the pandemic has implied in terms of measuring development, such as the reformulation of instruments that were implemented face-to-face or the need to have evidence-based information and data for decision-making at the policy level to effectively respond to the needs of children in this new scenario.

## **II. Session: Early Childhood Development and National Statistical Systems - Where Do We Stand? Discussion with Authorities in the Statistical Field.**

Moderated by Horacio Coral, Director of Methodology and Statistical Production of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) of Colombia, this panel focused on exposing the progress for developing the measurement agenda, as well as the urgency of accelerating its implementation during the pandemic, taking into account lessons learned and pending challenges.

The session centered on two questions: (i) What are the main advances that your country has made in relation to measuring early childhood development and using systems to integrate the use of administrative records into national statistics?; and (ii) What must be done when measuring childhood development to achieve continuity and political commitment?

### **PANELIST: FIORELLA DI LANDRI**

Coordinator of the Demography Unit of the National Institute of Statistics (INE in Spanish), Uruguay

She presented Uruguay's experience in the design and implementation of the Nutrition, Childhood Development and Health Survey (ENDIS in Spanish). This survey came about from a framework agreed upon by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Administration, and Uruguay Crece Contigo, in order to have longitudinal information to inform public policies making. Today it allows the monitoring of two population cohorts, one started in 2013 and the other in 2018.

She highlighted the use of administrative records for the design of the sampling frames. Thus, for the 2013 cohort, the records of the Household Survey of the National Institute of Statistics were used. The universe consisted of private homes for children aged 3 years and 11 months in areas with more than 5,000 inhabitants. The second round of the same cohort was carried out in 2015 and the third round was carried out in 2019. The sampling frame for the 2018 cohort was made based on the records of live births from the Ministry of Public Health. The use of the identity document has, in turn, made it possible to link the data and the results with other information tools from administrative records, allowing the analysis of new areas of interest.

The survey gathers information regarding socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the households; access to social benefits; food safety aspects; nutritional status through anthropometric measurements; child feeding indicators; assessment of childhood development; parenting practices at home; indicators of women's health and sexual and reproductive health; and access and use of health services as well as access to educational services.

## The Nutrition, Childhood Development and Health Survey (ENDIS) allows follow-ups to be conducted with two cohorts, the 2013 and the 2018 initiative.



### PANELIST: ROXANA MUÑOZ

Professional of the Undersecretariat for Children, Ministry of Social Development and Family (MDSF), Chile

She focused her presentation on the lessons learned from Chile, a country currently improving its institutional framework on children: new institutions have been created - such as the Subsecretaría y la Defensoría de la Niñez - and implementation has started of a new Specialized Protection System. These institutional changes demand new information about children, opening up new opportunities to advance the evaluation agenda.

The creation of a Childhood Guarantee System implies the commitment to create an integrated database that allows for monitoring of developmental trajectories of children and adolescents. It also implies the challenge of building an alert system based on administrative records that allows early identification of children at risk of having their rights violated. In this context, it is important to improve the available administrative record systems as well as the creation of inter-institutional agreements that enable data exchange.

For the creation of these information systems, Chile has relevant lessons learned from the experience of the referral and monitoring registry system of the Chile Crece Contigo Subsystem. Likewise, the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MDSF in Spanish) has a social information registry, created by law, which enables information exchange among the various services that provide benefits to children, in an integrated database. This database has recently been piloted as an information system open to academia, providing disaggregated data for research.

She also presented the experience of the Longitudinal Survey of Early Childhood (ELPI in Spanish), which has expanded its design according to the first cohorts of Niños Crecen, including measuring development not only in early childhood but also in pre-adolescence and adolescence. Today, the possibility of complementing the information in this survey with administrative records to enable the use of information available from public records is being considered.

The speaker highlighted the importance of generating more areas that provide accessibility to data in a transparent manner, considering that they are a source of information that accounts for the progress in the fulfillment of rights, informing various actors, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Institute, and the Defensoría de la Niñez, whose role is to permanently monitor indicators.

Finally, she highlighted the importance of establishing alliances with international organizations such as UNICEF and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). This enabled the opportunity to strengthen development actions such as estimating public investment in childhood from administrative records and public spending or establishing regional agreements within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda.



**It is important to create more areas that provide accessibility to data in a transparent manner, considering that they are a source of information that account progress made in the fulfillment of rights, informing various actors whose role is to permanently monitor indicators.**

**PANELIST: TERESA SHAMAH**

Director of the Center for Research in Evaluation and Surveys of the National Institute of Public Health (INSP), Mexico

She presented the lessons learned from the construction and implementation of the National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT in Spanish) in Mexico, as an institutionalized, culturally appropriate survey, accepted by the federal government to guide policies and programs that have a direct impact on children's health and well-being.

Although initially planned to be implemented every 6 years, currently the partial application of some indicators is carried out annually. The Early Childhood Development module is not included yearly; instead, indicators are surveyed every year on a continuous basis.

In 2018, at the end of the previous six-year term, financing was ensured for the 2020-2024 period. Today the challenge is ensuring that it is implemented into law as a priority for the government's agenda in subsequent years. She also highlighted the creation of the Child Development Assessment (EDI in Spanish) as a screening instrument, which use is gradually expanding.

She highlighted the importance of the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI), which has been used in sample studies as well as three population surveys. Since it was constructed using indicators from the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), that also allowed for comparability in some of its indicators.

**The National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT), was identified as a institutionally established survey that is culturally accepted by the federal government to guide policies and programs that have a direct impact on children's health and well-being.**



**PANELIST: JUAN DANIEL OVIEDO**

Director of the National Statistics Administration Department of Colombia (DANE)

He shared the lessons learned from Colombia regarding the experiences of the National Quality of Life Survey (ECV 2020 in Spanish), the Longitudinal Survey of Colombia (ELCO 2019 in Spanish) and the creation of a Statistical Registry of the Population (REBP 2018 in Spanish). The latter uses as a primary source, the integration of georeferenced administrative records (identification, health, birth, vaccination, deaths, migration, victims, tax records, among others), which allow the continuous integration of the information obtained through administrative records, with data collection via instruments for monitoring the population, such as longitudinal surveys.

This complementary data sources enables the analysis of new dimensions such as, multidimensional poverty indices (MPI 2020), which allowed the identification of the increase in multidimensional poverty during the pandemic in rural areas associated with school absence. It also provided insight on the deterioration in the quality of educational services measured through the quality-of-life survey.

Thus, the REBP has made it possible to integrate information sources. With this, algorithms can be built to enable an approximation to better understand social phenomena, as well as tie them to geographic locations.

He stressed that these complex and expensive surveys and studies, require political and economic commitment to ensure their continuity, but are valuable instruments for understanding the phenomena and for informed decision-making.

**SYNTHESIS OF IDEAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PANEL**

The nomination of the data in the surveys allows it to be matched with administrative databases or other measurement instruments, broadening, and deepening the possibilities for analysis.

It is essential to have plans for analyzing information from the design phase involving the largest number of stakeholders. This makes it possible to expand the technical support of the instruments and give greater sustainability to the investment. Contributing to the objectives of multiple actors and expanding technical political support for evaluation sustainability.

The use of administrative data enables the possibility of analyzing phenomena as well as the creation of information systems, such as early warning systems.

Sharing databases with academia facilitates (i) the synergy of efforts, by promoting greater use of data and research; (ii) greater support for technical political commitment for the continuity of the measuring efforts; and (iii) greater transparency of information.

The use of internationally used instrument indicators allows comparability among countries.

Having measuring instruments with a culturally appropriate approach is a challenge that is often exacerbated when countries use indicators or methodologies designed in other contexts; which is why they need to be adapted and aligned with current regulatory frameworks.

The participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society generates political efficacy and gives voice to population groups or users. Therefore, it is beneficial to integrate them into spaces such as technical working groups associated with evaluations. They exercise a monitoring role and promote accountability. Also, they facilitate the design of specific strategies and the detection of at-risk populations in territories. They can also become relevant spokespersons for disseminating results obtained and promoting relevant dialogues that are actionable.

Investing in measuring early childhood development makes sense when they inspire the design of public policies and actions.

It is helpful to develop plans for the use of the data to engage a broad stakeholder profile.

### III. Session: How Does Academia Contribute to the Advancement of the Agenda?

The session focused on analyzing how to improve the advocacy role of academia, highlighting the recommendation of strategies regarding what, how and when to use evidence-based information to inform public policies. This panel was moderated by Jeanet Leguas, Coordinator of the Chile Crece Contigo Subsystem in the Ministry of Social Development and Family in Chile.

The conversation centered around the following questions: (i) What was the evaluation experience that each of the experts led? How did it originate and what participation did government entities have?; (ii) How were the results of this measuring effort used to define or change public policy decisions for early childhood or programs targeting childhood development?; (iii) What has happened to these initiatives? Has it been maintained over time? What degree of institutionalization has been achieved?; and (iv) What recommendations do you have for other academics or experts on how to be more influential sharing their childhood development work?

#### **PANELIST: PAULA BEDREGAL**

Head of the Department of Public Health of the School of Medicine of the Pontificia Universidad Católica, Chile

Paula Bedregal stressed that the essential tasks of academia are teaching, researching, and disseminating. In the framework of the last two, there is an opportunity to contribute to actions such as the evaluation of programs and policies to determine their effectiveness, quality and impact as well as their specific components such as the design and implementation of instruments or psychometric evaluations of childhood development. To carry out this type of study, academics use public funds, international organizations, or alliances with non-governmental organizations.

In her experience, measuring development has made it possible to refine programs. However, for a correct interpretation of the results, it is relevant to consider not only the information generated by the evaluations themselves, but also other elements within their context. In this sense, the participation of researchers in commissions or working groups with experts convened by the government makes it possible to contribute and add to said reflection.

On the other hand, she shared that her experience as an academic has been to strengthen the work of implementing teams, by exercising the role of expert mediator, allowing the synthesis and approach to the accumulated evidence. This link between academia and the teams implementing the intervention strategies or policies allows, in turn, the researcher to collect findings from the implementers that enable adjustments to be made in the interpretation of the data that academia generates, providing more elements of analysis for the understanding of the phenomena.

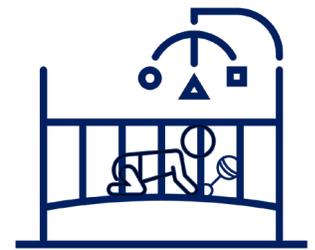
In Chile, the Early Childhood Development (ECD) evaluation experiences would be, in her opinion, quite institutionalized as an indicator of global monitoring, of macro policy monitoring, and as an element for measuring health and education benefits. However, she considers it necessary to question what and how it is measured, to better understand the impact of ECD efforts. The following are her recommendations, based on her experience:

- Research while keeping in mind strategic times for advocacy, for example, when faced with changes in governments, in order to have relevant information and insights that can be made available to the programmatic teams of presidential candidacies. This can impact the agenda that these candidates set and include early childhood development as a key component. This allows setting up and maintaining the childhood agenda, as well as sustaining strategies that have shown good results, establishing budgetary needs that will later determine the actions of the incoming government. This role with legislative decision-making entities is also essential, considering that an appropriate legislative and budgetary discussion implies having relevant information.
- She also highlighted the importance of fostering spaces for public feedback to adequately incorporate needs and better understand contexts.

- She recognized the role of international organizations in giving continuity to initial agreements and quality agendas, and to promote scientific dissemination through joint publication.
- She warned about the importance of ensuring transparency given the potential conflicts of interest underlying the measurement actions -both from the academy and from the State.

Finally, she stated that the pandemic had a negative impact on the application of tools that measure development, so it is urgent to revisit these to have appropriate data to implement remedial actions. It is essential that the population return to health check-ups and reintegrate children into in-person education, along with the prioritization of efforts to systematically measure children.

**The link between academia and the teams implementing the intervention strategies or policies allows, in turn, the researcher to collect findings from the implementers that enable adjustments to be made in the interpretation of the data that academia generates, providing more elements of analysis for the understanding of the phenomena.**



**PANELIST: TIAGO MUNHOZ**

Researcher at the Center for Epidemiological Research of the Universidad Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL), Brazil

Tiago Munhoz gave a presentation on the impact evaluation of the Programa Crianza Feliz (Happy Parenting Program - PCF), providing an account of some of their findings.

This evaluation was planned with a total duration of 4 years, to be implemented in 30 municipalities in 6 states of Brazil. In its design, it considers conducting annual evaluation visits to the entire population sample, additional visits to a subsample, and complementary visits to municipal teams to evaluate the implementation of the program.

For the impact evaluation, a baseline was established in the 30 defined municipalities, with a target group and a control group, considering a sample of more than 1,600 families with similar characteristics in each group.

In 2019, the first information survey was carried out, being able to visit about 90% of the selected families. In 2020, the evaluation plan was interrupted due to the pandemic, canceling the second data collection. In 2021, the evaluation visits have been resumed, using the previously agreed upon evaluation strategy designed.

Based on this experience, he highlighted the importance of having quick, individualized instruments that are properly validated and freely accessible.

Finally, he stated that the dilemmas faced by children today are similar to those presented prior to the pandemic and that it depends on the social contexts of each country. However, poverty has worsened, and this is expected to have a greater negative impact on the most vulnerable families. This is a reality that already existed, but which was aggravated after the pandemic. Therefore, the challenge during the recovery stage is to give continuity to the supply of existing services.

**PANELIST: ANTONIO RIZZOLI**

Head of the Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Service of the Hospital Infantil Federico Gómez, Mexico

Antonio Rizzoli spoke about his experience in the design and application of the Child Development Assessment (EDI) test, a screening tool validated in Mexico. He highlighted the need for individual evaluations to guide intervention actions among children. This type of instrument is essential, as it accomplishes its purpose of informing on developmental conditions of a particular child, and therefore fulfills a very different objective from measuring a population to evaluating policies and programs.

He highlighted the importance of investing in appropriate training for professionals who use this type of instrument and providing technical support through virtual platforms, which in his experience is an adequate, low-cost alternative. He pointed out the need for these trainings to focus not only on ensuring an adequate application of the assessment instruments, but rather on correctly interpreting the results. This enables the information to be used for the design of individual intervention plans for children and adolescents.

On the other hand, he highlighted the importance of including emotion recognition within the aspects evaluated in childhood development. He proposed that defining an optimal level of development of emotional capacities in children should be based on a position regarding the type of society we want to build and, therefore, the capabilities we expect people to have for the purpose.

He explained the need for an agenda that promotes integration among the sectors involved with childhood, especially education and health. In his experience, the application of the EDI test by both sectors facilitates articulation by establishing a common language and promoting joint work. Currently both sectors apply the same instrument, but the version for education does not include the neurological evaluation items.

Likewise, he highlighted the importance of moving towards an agenda for the measurement and promotion of ECD, understood as a State policy rather than as government initiatives, in order to promote the continuity of efforts at the country level. For this, it is important that parents and the entire community recognize the importance of ECD.

He commented that the EDI test has been adapted to be used in Manizales, Colombia, and today Panama is in the process of being adapted to give it cultural relevance. The test is free and open.

Finally, he urged the need to design policies focused on children beyond the delivery of services; to advance towards policies of the State rather than of governments; to consider children as present and not as future; and to measure child development to impact the specific interventions of each child rather than to evaluate childhood policies.



**The Child Development Assessment (EDI) test accomplishes its purpose of informing on developmental conditions of a particular child, and therefore fulfills a very different objective from measuring a population to evaluate policies and programs.**

**SYNTHESIS OF IDEAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PANEL**

The academy can fulfil several very relevant roles for the advancement of the measurement agenda:

- Technically accompany the implementing teams, providing and facilitating the understanding of the evidence for decision-making.
- Advocate based on evidence for the adequate prioritization of the childhood agenda and informed decision-making before the construction of government programs, budget prioritization or legislative initiatives.

Opening spaces for exchange and participation with citizens allows adjustments to be made in the measurements or in the reading of data, better integrating the contexts and needs of the populations of interest into the analysis.

Development measurement instruments intended for the individual intervention of children are relevant tools to guide the actions that child development service providers carry out in individual intervention. They can also facilitate intersectoral work when the health and education sectors share a common instrument, allowing greater synergies and consistency in the development support actions received by children and their families. Furthermore, it is relevant to invest in training professionals and technicians who apply these guidelines for an adequate understanding of the implications of the results in the design of individual care plans.

The participation of the academia in work groups that guide public decisions benefits when the results of said work effectively impact the decisions made.

It is essential to clearly determine all potential conflicts of interest that arise on development measurements, for example, when deciding to change the use of one test for another, considering possible links of interest between researchers and institutions.

The instruments and the data collection methodology should make it possible to determine the true effect of an intervention, using control groups.

In a post-pandemic context, it is necessary to resume measurement services and exercises. The pandemic has aggravated the social context problems affecting children, such as poverty and inequity, and it is necessary to have data to guide decisions-making for children.

**The pandemic has aggravated the social context problems affecting children, such as poverty and inequity, and it is necessary to have data to guide decisions-making for children.**



#### IV. Session: Advancements made in GSED as a Regional Instrument: What is the Global Agenda for Measuring Childhood Development Among the Youngest Children?

This was the last session of the first day and it was moderated by Brenda González, Director of Monitoring Early Childhood Policies of the Executive Secretariat of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (SIPINNA in Spanish) in Mexico. In the session, Michelle Pérez, member of the coordinating team of the Global Scale of Evaluation of Early Childhood Development (GSED), presented the progress in the construction of this scale, an initiative that is expected to allow the comparability of indicators worldwide.

The GSED scale arises from the need to have valid, reliable, global, open access indicators that allow comparability of indicators among countries. For this, three instruments are being developed: (i) a short questionnaire, (ii) a long questionnaire and (iii) a psychosocial scale that allows the development of a metric (D score) aimed at creating development curves. The ongoing challenges include standardizing the D score that allows comparability between countries and ages, identifying cut-off scores that allow determining normal, lagging or delayed development categories.

The short questionnaire is not expected to exceed 25 minutes and allows population wide monitoring due to the information collected from caregivers, yielding a global development score that includes all the dimensions assessed. The long questionnaire is projected to have a duration of 75 minutes, including the administration directly to the child, the completion of tasks and the establishment of scores by dimensions of development. Considers the use of a kit of culturally acceptable objects that can be adapted according to specific contexts. Finally, the psychosocial scale is expected to have an estimated implementation duration of 15 minutes. Its design is still in process and it will seek to capture non-normative development patterns that involve mental health challenges, such as sleeping or eating patterns.

The design of these instruments expects to achieve neutrality and easy adaptation as well as to predict the future performance of the young population in which they are applied. The instruments are intended to be freely accessible, reliable and valid, easy to learn and implement, to facilitate their implementation on a large scale. This initiative is the result of the integration of three original efforts: CREDI from Harvard University, IYCD from the WHO and D-score from the Global Child Development Group; WHO acts as the project leader.



### **Global Scale of Evaluation of Early Childhood Development (GSED) arises from the need to have valid, reliable, global, open access indicators that allow comparability of indicators among countries.**

The process of construction of the GSED has had several stages, from the harmonization of the instruments, the elaboration of the questionnaire prototypes, the development of the materials that accompany the instruments (manuals, additional materials and audiovisuals, among others) as well as the pilot and validation of the instruments. The piloting - currently underway in some countries - considers actions such as the translation and adaptation of the instruments, the adaptation of the data recording systems, the training of implementing teams, the analysis of the data, among others. Once this phase is completed, the validation begins in groups of more than 1,200 children, comparing them with the Bayley scale in most cases.

Due to the pandemic and depending on the cultural contexts of each country where the prototypes are piloted, there are specific challenges for validation, such as difficulties when grandparents participate as informants. The first experiences have shown that the short and long questionnaires are easy to administer, but some caregivers have concerns as to the reported behaviors about their children, which is why support for families is being strengthened in the training sessions of implementers. Additionally, an App has been implemented to facilitate the application of questionnaires.

The ongoing challenges include the search for funding to validate the instruments in other countries, whether in the full package of instruments or, failing that, in the short questionnaire. Experts hope to escalate the use of the GSED and eventually adapt it for individual use; but for now, it only allows its use population wide. Also, the use of the D-score is expected to be expanded to connect with the measurement instrument promoted by UNICEF.

Although it is expected to be freely applicable and does not consider the payment of user licenses, it is not yet possible to have it for free, as it implies costs for a rigorous adaptation.

Finally, we also expect to validate the form of implementation (currently face-to-face), since it could be adapted to an electronic or telephone format, a methodology that will be explored soon in Brazil (the only country in the region that is part of the ongoing pilots). The countries where it is in the process of piloting and validation are those that have expressed their interest therein; If any country is interested in being part of the initiative, the possibility is open.

## *SECOND DAY/ September 30, 2021*

### **V. Session: Impacts of the Pandemic on Childhood Development. Implications and Urgencies for Measuring Development in the Short- and Medium-Term.**

The object of this session was to analyze the implications of the pandemic on the agenda for measuring childhood development. Monica Rubio, UNICEF Regional Advisor for Social Policies for Latin America and the Caribbean, moderated the session and highlighted that the information available reveals that the impact of the pandemic on children in the region is dramatic. For this reason, today it is necessary to implement surveys that appropriately measure their needs.

#### **PANELIST: RAÚL MERCER**

Coordinator of the Social Sciences and Health Program of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Argentina

What do we know about the situation of children during the pandemic and what challenges do we have at the regional and global level?

Mercer spoke about the impact of the pandemic on children from the perspective of children as individuals with rights, inequities and social determinants of health. He highlighted that the pandemic has exposed the inequities in the region – with Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) being amongst the most inequitable in the world. As a result, the epidemiological burden of the pandemic in the region is the highest in the world.

He emphasized that understanding that the effects of the pandemic could not be done purely from a health point of view, but also economic and social. There are greater health concerns for children than those directly associated with the effects of the virus, such as the increased poverty. In addition, there are complex phenomena such as massive migratory processes and the increase in unemployment. Likewise, he stressed that from the perspective of understanding that the path of the pandemic is different depending on where it resides, the impact on the population is also affected by elements such as communication, politicization, corruption or the rationality of the measures adopted by the State. Therefore, there is no singular element that can explain the effects of the pandemic on early childhood, but rather multiple elements should be considered in these analyzes, such as inequality, low growth, the concentration of power, violence, or the design of policies that affect health governance.

He warned that during the pandemic, childhood was "trapped" by regulations that placed children in confinement at home. Children were exposed to a series of threats to their well-being due to differences in context at home or digital inequities. Thus, children saw their rights restricted - a situation that gradually changed throughout the pandemic. The restrictions placed on children from participating in public spaces would have "masked" their childhood. The three usual channels of communication or interaction with them - educational centers, health services, and protection systems - remained restricted during the pandemic. He stressed the need to "unmask" the reality experienced by children to understand the extent of the effects of the pandemic on them.

He highlighted, however, that some States adopted a constructive vision of health from a “salutogenic” model and with a community perspective, enhancing the resilience of communities by giving a strong role to primary care services. It is also positive that many organizations have raised a solidarity agenda linked to the protection of children, with monetary transfers, food programs, educational responses, social protection, and child welfare. This in turn could generate evidence with a more comprehensive understanding or giving a voice to children by surveying the psychological impacts of the pandemic on children's mental health and exposing diverse situations of gender inequality.

Likewise, he highlighted that the Lancet-WHO-UNICEF Report A Future for the Children of the World? - published prior to the onset of the pandemic- exposes emerging and urgent issues for children, such as environmental and commercial threats. This report includes a ranking of conditions for the development of children by country and shows that none of them have appropriate indicators; therefore, he stated that there is a global responsibility to guarantee the health and quality of life of children at a global level. The report also emphasizes that the focus on children as consumers rather than subjects of rights implies threats to their development.

Finally, he warned that beyond the immediate effects of the pandemic, there will be late effects linked to the decrease in health care and the management of the pandemic. These effects will have a chronic impact, with long-term and even intergenerational consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to guarantee rights as a substantive axis for the protection of children. He urged to “remote covid” from the analysis of the pandemic, broadening the view to accommodate the complexity of the contexts, advocating for children from a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective.

## He stressed the need to "unmask" the reality experienced by children to understand the extent of the effects of the pandemic on them.



### PANELIST: GABRIELA GUERRERO

Main Researcher of the Analysis Group for Development (GRADE in Spanish), Peru

How to measure strategies and experiences in this context. What do we know about evaluation challenges in this period?

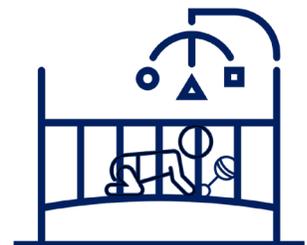
Gabriela Guerrero shared her findings from her research mapping evaluation initiatives in the region during the pandemic. This work sought to identify and describe evaluations, recognizing common themes and interests, analyzing their strengths and challenges for the implementation of measurement instruments in the context of the Covid-19 emergency. In this regard, she noted that:

- It was complex to find evaluations that included children under 6 years of age in remote surveys.
- 10 surveys were identified: 6 telephone surveys, of which only one was specifically focused on early childhood, and 4 were administered online. With the passage of time, more evaluations were conducted in the region that were not included in Guerrero's mapping, such as ENCOVID survey carried out in Ecuador.
- A quality survey requires a solid design. It is especially hard to create and implement remote surveys in a context of confinement and social distancing. In this sense, telephone surveys turned out to be a more robust methodology, resulting in a more representative sample compared to online surveys. However, these surveys carry their own challenges such as determining an adequate response rate with respect to the number of calls made and they may have biases associated with the number of non-active phones due to lack of payment.

- If the implementation of telephone surveys is not possible due to budgetary restrictions, online surveys seem to be a correct alternative, but they require the appropriate definition of their scope and limitations. The main advantage of this type of instrument is that it allows reaching a greater number of people in less time and with a limited budget. They can be useful to understand some phenomena, test a hypothesis or visualize trends. However, representation bias is an important consideration to have when picking this type of survey since it requires internet access. For this reason, the representation of rural areas or marginalized populations is more complex. Among the specific lessons learned about online surveys, Guerrero highlights that the means utilized to disseminate the evaluations can also be associated with a bias. Therefore, it is advisable to disseminate them through childcare centers rather than through research centers.
- The fact that the evaluations are applied remotely implies implementation of the survey in a short period of time. Either by telephone or online strategy, they should not take longer than 15 to 30 minutes. This implies prioritizing the information that is collected, as it does not permit addressing multiple topics of interest. A recommendation in this regard is to privilege those aspects on which there is a clear plan for using the data. She highlighted a strategy used in Mexico consisting of randomizing the application of sections of a broad questionnaire to cover a greater number of topics.
- Guerrero also recommended that in the case of an emergency context, it is best to utilize existing surveys and instruments in the design of these new evaluations. This facilitates the formulation of questions - since the phrasing has already been tested - and allows the results obtained to be comparable with previous applications of the basic instruments. Likewise, incorporating questions from international instruments allows for comparability amongst countries.
- The revised evaluations had a special focus on socio-emotional components. Two of the ten surveys measured socio-emotional development properly and another five included questions on socio-emotional well-being. This emphasis is related to the recognition of the evident impact of the pandemic in the short-term and, the fact that, in a survey directed to caregivers, this dimension is more appropriate to measure from the perception of adults in charge of upbringing. Other dimensions of childhood development are more difficult to measure at a distance such as language since they require having more precise and direct evaluation results. For this reason, it is relevant that in-person surveys resume.
- Violence in the home was another widely considered dimension-eight out of ten evaluations addressed this issue- with three different approaches: (i) discipline and physical punishment, (ii) increased tensions in the home, and (iii) occurrence of direct violence. The main challenge with measuring this dimension is underreporting. Despite this, its inclusion is considered relevant since it generates a baseline to develop response strategies, identifying the most affected groups and monitoring increases in incidents among pandemic waves.
- The survey is a tool, but it cannot be considered a goal in itself; therefore, it requires a built-in plan for the use of the data developed alongside end-users in order to effectively utilize the data.

Finally, she urged REMDI to continue promoting knowledge-sharing spaces for learning among countries, given that there are common interests and needs that enable collaboration in significant efforts, such as progress towards strategies that allow comparability of information, encourage dialogue, and critical reflection about the methodologies and findings of the evaluations. The consequences of the pandemic will continue in the long-term, so it is important to monitor the development of children incorporating a variety of relevant dimensions, keeping the evaluation agenda active.

**A survey is a tool, but it cannot be considered a goal in itself; therefore, it requires a built-in plan for the use of the data developed alongside end-users in order to effectively utilize the data.**



**SYNTHESIS OF IDEAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PANEL**

The pandemic can be understood from broad perspectives like syndemic and an endopandemic. It has exposed the enormous inequalities in the region and the drastic impact on children.

The pandemic positions the region at a critical turning point, where underpinning the evaluation agenda is key to recalibrating efforts and informing decisions in childhood.

In this context, REMDI's role takes on special relevance and constitutes an opportunity to advance the evaluation agendas in the countries of the region.

In emergency contexts, the use of evaluation instruments that are brief and can be applied at a distance may be the best possible evaluation alternative.

Evaluation efforts in the region during the pandemic have provided valuable lessons for the design and implementation of equivalent strategies for other emergency contexts.

**VI. Session: Governance and Development of Institutional Capability for Measuring Childhood Development.**

Gabriela Sanchez, Coordinator of Programs of the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI) lead this session. This discussion explored the examples of Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Uruguay use of systematic evaluation with higher levels of consolidation and the lessons learned. The following questions guided the discussion: (i) How is the participation and coordination of the different sectors (health, social development, education, etc.) achieved in the design, implementation and use of the evaluations?; (ii) What institutional and human capabilities are needed to guarantee relevant and high-quality evaluations?; (iii) How can one develop these capabilities and consolidate them over time?; (iv) What are the sources of financing and how is the sustainability of the financing for evaluations achieved?; (v) What are the main risks to the continuity of evaluations?; and (vi) How do changes in periodicity and institutionalization (for example, government turnover) affect evaluation efforts?

**PANELIST: GIORGINA GARIBOTTO**

Director of Management and Knowledge Generation Division of Uruguay Crece Contigo in the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), Uruguay

How to achieve and strengthen intersectoral coordination in the development of evaluations? Experience from the Nutrition, Childhood Development and Health Survey - (ENDIS in Spanish).

Garibotto stressed the importance of gathering information that is useful for many sectors. This makes the design of the instrument more complex, but these efforts are capitalized through the extensive use of data. Today the ENDIS makes it possible to assess the prevalence of health indicators, report internationally, monitor policies, and achieve economies of scale by having a tool that allows reporting on different areas. Likewise, it allows national validation of the instruments used and the availability of data for academic research from a reliable source.

ENDIS is supplied with administrative data but has highlighted the need for quality records to enable use as a permanent source of information. This also enables following up longitudinally cohorts through a series of information gathering.

A steering committee has enabled coordination among sectors. The information collected serves all its members and is freely available for the specific uses of each institution. In addition, contests are held for researchers focused on early childhood to promote the use of information in analyses, independent from the original plan for the use of the data, linked to the design and improvement of childhood policies. Thus, technicians, authorities, and academics are users of this information, which requires constant articulation. The fact that the information is used for the design of public policies is essential for the construction of a robust instrument.

Garibotto highlighted the importance of ensuring the legitimacy of the teams in charge of the survey with the help of technically trained teams in each sector.

The sustainability and financing of this instrument has varied over time. Today it depends on a set of institutions that participate both in its designing and financing. It has also been supported by international organizations. However, the role of public financing is key for its sustainability.

Changes in government may affect the frequency of the implementation of these surveys, since adjustments are made based on the priorities of the governments. As technical-political support for evaluations in technical teams and decision-makers increases, its relevance and legitimacy becomes stronger.

Finally, she stressed that in the various stages of survey design, all interested academics and political actors should converge, so that it results in better policies and responses for children. In closing, she urged the need to recognize that we have quality professionals at a regional level and that the needs of early childhood are included in the public policy agenda. This allows us to exchange significant lessons learned in the region.

## **The Nutrition, Childhood Development and Health Survey (ENDIS) makes it possible to assess the prevalence of health indicators, report internationally, monitor policies, and achieve economies of scale by having a tool that allows reporting on different areas.**



### **PANELIST: HORACIO CORAL**

Director of Methodology and Statistical Production of the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), Colombia

Institutional and human resource capability. Learning from the Longitudinal Survey of Colombia - (ELCO in Spanish).

Coral indicated that ELCO was in the planning stages when Colombia joined REMDI and stated that it has finally been implemented and the results are very useful. The evaluation carried out with this instrument in 2019 is currently a relevant basis for comparison prior to the pandemic. There is another survey planned for 2022. The ELCO allows monitoring the evolution of multiple indicators that, prior to their creation, were surveyed through two initiatives that served as the basis for their design. There were many lessons learned in this process. In this regard, he indicated the following:

- ELCO was conceived from two compatible surveys, which by combining them could give greater value to the evaluations: the ELPS, carried out in 2012 and 2015 (in 2015 it was partially implemented) by the Department of National Statistics and the ELCA (Longitudinal Survey of the Universidad de los Andes) held in 2010 and 2013. With the support of experts, an agreement for cooperation was implemented that allowed the design of the ELCO.
- The basic diagnosis showed that DANE was finding it difficult to maintain the ELPS sample, which is why the survey was strengthened institutionally by allying itself with the University. Thus, combining both samples, the impact of the results would be greater.
- The ELCA did not seek to be nationally representative; however, the ELPS did. Therefore, combining them would allow the construction of a baseline for 2019, with longitudinal statistical information as an input for the monitoring, design, formulation, and reformulation of public policies. This was intended for more than academic use.

- The cost of this type of survey is very high, but alliance with new actors has allowed progress in the implementation of the instrument. Thus, an agreement was established with the national government for the financing of its application in 2022, which considers an equivalent period of information gathering to that of its previous version. The findings should be published in 2023.
- In its 2019 implementation phase, it considered a sample of 40 thousand people, after the first survey, a few more cities were surveyed. It included the application of anthropometric measurements and psychological tests for children between the ages of 0 and 12 years old.
- Today, the microdata collected in 2019 is being published with longitudinal expansion factors that will allow monitoring of the previous ELCA and ELPS surveys.



## The microdata collected in 2019 is being published with longitudinal expansion factors that will allow monitoring of the previous ELCA and ELPS surveys.

### PANELIST: JENNY ENCINA

Professional Specialized in Research and Childhood Methodology from the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MDSF), Chile

Achieving Financial Sustainability: Learning from the Longitudinal Survey of Early Childhood - (ELPI in Spanish).

ELPI started in 2010 and included children ages 0 to 3 years old. The survey has been subsequently applied in the years 2012 and 2017 and is scheduled for the year 2022, when the first cohort of children will already be adolescents. Over time, they have included new information panels. It is currently considering a panel for children ages 0 to 5 years old, with a representative sample at the regional level.

ELPI was created by academia, with the support of the Ministry of Education, and was then supported by other ministries. Since 2017, it has been established as an institutional commitment of the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MDSF), which has been essential for its sustainability. This initial transfer of leadership between ministries posed multiple risks to the continuity, periodicity, and design of the instrument. Counterparts are established in each institution to coordinate the sectors involved. These counterparts establish specific requirements for the information collected according to their own interest. Academia plays a fundamental role, verifying how topics remain a priority or vary over time. UNICEF has offered constant advice and is helping ELPI flourish in the long-term, setting milestones and proposing appropriate instruments. This framework of alliances has given the survey sustenance and strength, expanding its commitment.

As of this year, a panel of experts from civil society has been incorporated to guide and prioritize issues, also involving them in the use of information. The MDSF is the entity responsible for the survey and has technical teams with extensive experience on the application of instruments such as CASEN, ENDISC or the child labor survey. It is a ministry that can adequately handle technical aspects pertaining to the instrument. The accumulation of knowledge about early childhood by this ministry has been positive. The team in charge of ELPI has not undergone major changes with the various administrations, which allows keeping the protocols updated on how to measure, what to ask, how to use administrative data, and how to ensure data quality, among other key aspects.

This appropriation of the ELPI by the MDSF has been relevant to ensure its financing and give sustainability to the survey, as it is integrated into the budget programs of the ministry - entity that leads the negotiations with the Budget Directorate. This has made it possible to safeguard the budget during government turnover or when faced with secondary budgetary reallocations to contingencies. Coordination with the other sectors allows the establishment of a joint spokesperson and the alignment of the priorities of all those involved. Therefore, there is a solid commitment to maintain the survey with the appropriate financing and institutional design considerations.

**PANELIST: ARGELIA VÁZQUEZ**

Researcher at ECD, National Institute of Public Health (INSP), Mexico

How Do Changes in Periodicity and Institutional Framework Affect the Survey? How is the Sustainability of Financing Ensured? Lessons learned from the National Health and Nutrition Survey, ENSANUT.

Measuring early childhood development (ECD) in Mexico began in the 1980s. This has resulted in a wealth of experience for the National Institute of Public Health (INSP) in this matter. The first evaluation of nutritional levels was carried out in 2015 and the results identified the need to include a complementary ECD module, with indicators extracted from the MICS survey that allow international comparability.

Then, there is the challenge of scaling up a reliable, culturally appropriate ECD evaluation, with indicators aligned with the country's regulatory and public policy framework. Today, the INSP is responsible for this evaluation of ECD. For this, different tools are generated according to population subgroups, with results at both the national and state level. All the information collected is reviewed by the Specialized Technical Committee on Information on Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents (CTEIPIDNNA in Spanish). The institutions that make up this committee must have sufficient financial, human, and material resources for the task. For this purpose, an alliance with students from the University of Mexico was established.

The information generated is shared through national and state reports, publications in scientific journals and informative booklets targeting decision-makers.

These evaluations inform indicators of early childhood development, exposure to violent disciplinary methods, prevalence of health conditions, exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months, among other matters of interest.

From the year 2020 and until the year 2024, an annual information survey will be carried out with secured financing. This will allow us to have a nationally representative sample of information on early childhood, including urban and rural, with representation in four states of the country. There is an alliance between academia and some government sectors to advocate for the prioritization of early childhood monitoring, seeking to ensure financing for the next six-year term.

**SYNTHESIS OF IDEAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PANEL**

The region has rich experiences to be shared that allow horizontal knowledge-exchange.

Opening the technical working groups to various actors and institutions allows the instruments to be perfected, facilitating articulation among the sectors involved, and broadening political and technical support to ensure evaluations are sustainable. Likewise, it strengthens the sustainability of the evaluations that target generating data that is available and useful for various purposes.

It is essential to have recognized and validated technical teams to convey knowledge on a permanent basis.

The place or institution that assumes the leadership of an evaluation is relevant and should allow promoting an adequate articulation of the sectors involved, as an intermediary recognized by the diversity of actors. However, the coordination of the actors involved is not a task that can be carried out exclusively by a particular agency but rather requires the joint effort and support of the actors involved.

Having information regarding the variety of measurement instruments and approaches, based on the experiences of the countries, is very useful and adequately complements knowledge sharing.

## VII. Final Session: Political Commitment and Public Policy Actions to Support Childhood Development through Informed Decision-Making. How to Advance Significantly in the Region? Barriers and Challenges for Permanent and Quality Evaluation.

This was the last session of the conference, moderated by Ariel Fiszbein, Director of the Education Program at the Inter-American Dialogue. The discussion centered around these key questions: (i) What are the main actions being taken by the government of your country that target measuring early childhood development? (ii) What is the projection of these policies for the coming years, considering the barriers and challenges your country faces to achieve a permanent and quality evaluation of childhood development?

### **PANELIST: MARTIN LEMA**

Minister of Social Development, Uruguay

Martin Lema argued that talking about early childhood is talking about the development of countries. In Uruguay, informed decision-making has become a state policy, especially when it comes to childhood. This requires having data to increase the efficiency of policies. ENDIS has been a learning experience for the country, considering that although it is an evaluation initiated by a government from another political party, it has great potential for informed decision-making. Due to this quality, it can transcend the change of administration and become a State initiative. This is why two other evaluations phases have been projected for years 2022 and 2024, adding new components that expand the information collected, especially when rolling out to rural sectors, understanding that different realities require different actions. Considering differences in population groups will allow the design of more appropriate responses for those contexts.

The information obtained through ENDIS has made it possible to plan for the future. Among them, he highlighted some particular lines of action, such as the definition of family support strategies from the maternity wards for families of newborns; the strengthening of the care systems through grants for access to private care centers in areas where there is no coverage by the Childhood and Family Care Centers (CAIF - Centros de Atención a la Infancia y la Familia); the integration of information systems for the definition of beneficiary groups; and the creation of the "Crianza Bonus" for children ages 0 to 4 years old, which allows access to elements to promote development during early childhood.

### **PANELIST: PATRICIA MUÑOZ**

Defender of Childhood, Chile

Patricia Muñoz highlighted the importance of maintaining the independence of the evaluations with respect to the governments in power, understanding them as central actions for monitoring the fulfillment of the rights of children from their earliest age. She stressed that children are entitled to harmonious and integral development as well as to survival and a healthy life. Therefore, in order to monitor the exercise of their rights, information is required to account for their compliance, in its various dimensions.

She pointed out that difficulties are often experienced in decision-making due to the lack of precise data, which allows understanding particularities of the reality of children and adolescents, visualizing the specific differences among population groups.

Finally, she called for the design and implementation of public policies for children and adolescents to always be carried out from a human rights perspective, regardless of the political position of those governing.

### **PANELISTA: CAROLINA SALGADO**

Presidential Advisor for Children and Adolescent Matters, Colombia

Carolina Salgado stressed that in Colombia, progress is being made in childhood and adolescence policies from a human rights perspective and that this requires distinguishing and parsing the particularities of development and needs of each stage of childhood. This will in turn promote actions that enhance learning. She pointed out that measuring early childhood development implies coordinated efforts among diverse actors, since the implementation of services for this age group is channeled through the various sectors that, in the case of Colombia, are integrated through the Early Childhood Commission.

She explained that in Colombia, development is measured through health consultations that are mandatory country-wide. The instrument used for this has been built by the Ministry of Health, within the framework of the Comprehensive Health Policy and aligned with the Early Childhood Policy. It is an instrument that includes the perception of parents, caregivers, and teachers about the development of children. When any alteration is investigated, this entails the application of a modified questionnaire that allows a more in-depth assessment. The questionnaire also allows follow-ups with children and monitoring of attendance at these assessment consultations, implying the referral to intersectoral actions for those children who fail to attend their check-ups. Today they are perfecting the training processes of the professionals who implement this survey.

She also highlighted the pedagogical evaluation, which is based on permanent observation and active listening by teachers, in a flexible model, with a comprehensive and participatory perspective. The primary objective is receiving feedback on pedagogical practices and adjust them to the contexts and singularities of the target group. She also mentioned the evaluation of spontaneous and natural activities with peers, teachers, and parents of children.

#### **SYNTHESIS OF IDEAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE PANEL**

It is essential to continue advancing in the understanding of the measurement of development as a State policy, which transcends the initiatives of individual governments, giving continuity and sustainability to the measurements as well as to the work groups, taking advantage of technical capacities and financing alliances established.

Evaluations also play a key role in monitoring compliance with children's rights, being relevant inputs for the actors working in the defense of human rights.

The early childhood development measurement agenda is a multifaceted agenda at the center of early childhood policy debates.

The information generated by the evaluations is an essential input for the design of programs and policies, as well as for their management, but it is also a very important source of information for non-state actors, such as teachers, caregivers or civil society in general. This poses a significant challenge in terms of how to dispose of and communicate this information, with strategies to make the most of the data.

#### **NOTES**

1. Chile, represented by the coordination of Chile Crece Contigo, Colombia, represented by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE - Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística), Mexico, represented by the National System for the Protection of Children (SIPINNA) and Uruguay, represented by the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES).

2. Views as of November 4, 2021.



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