



CULTURAL DREAM: EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

“I dream of an Amazon region that can preserve its distinctive cultural riches, where the beauty of our humanity shines forth in so many varied ways.”

Papa Francisco



CULTURAL DREAM: EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT

MES DOMINICANO POR LA PAZ
Comprometidos con la Amazonía
2023





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CRIES FROM OUR DEAR AMAZONIA - EDUCATION

"I dream of an Amazon that preserves the cultural richness that makes it stand out, where human beauty shines in so many different ways". -Pope Francis

1.1. EDUCATIONAL REALITY IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

Among the complexities of the Amazonian territory, we highlight the fragility of education, especially among indigenous peoples. Although education is a human right, the quality of



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education is poor and school dropout rates are high, especially among girls. Education evangelizes, promotes social transformation, empowering people with a holy critical sense. *"A good school education at an early age lays seeds that can produce lifelong effects"* (LS 213). It is our task to promote an education for solidarity, based on the awareness of a common origin and a future shared by all. (cf. LS 202) [...]

Promoting education in a culturally and linguistically diverse context, marked by ongoing struggles for recognition and visibility, is a great challenge that the educational mission of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Maldonado (VAPM) has taken on since its inception. For many years, the schools run by the Dominicans operated independently, until in 1953, with RM N° 11466-1953ED, the Ministry of Education authorized their operation as "Grupo Móvil de Educación Fundamental de la Selva" (Mobile Group of Fundamental Education of the Jungle). Later, with RS N° 01231971-ED, it was called "Red Escolar de la Selva del Sur-Oriente Peruano" (RESSOP).

The RESSOP serves more than 4,300 students from 47 native communities, primarily Amazonian communities that are difficult to access due to their dispersion and demographics, historically excluded and impoverished, in which 79 educational institutions operate, grouped into three subnetworks: Madre de Dios (Tambopata and Manu), Cusco (La Convención) and Ucayali (Atalaya). Through an agreement between the Ministry of Education and VAPM/RESSOP, the Church joins efforts to promote intercultural and bilingual education; however, the challenges are pressing and limit the respect and full exercise of education as a fundamental right. The educational path of students in RESSOP schools is complex and incomplete, due to structural problems in the educational environment and the difficulties faced by RESSOP's management due to scarce human and financial resources.

RESSOP has been establishing all possible articulation alliances at the territorial, national and global levels to ensure the sustainability of the educational project, and to make it possible to make the budget feasible to strengthen the management of the coordination and pedagogical accompaniment of the Network. It also joins the processes of civil society to demand that governments move towards quality education, ensuring the implementation of relevant public, intercultural and bilingual education.



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The constitution of REPAM (Ecclesial Network of the Pan-Amazonia) and CEAMA (Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon) is making possible the construction of common commitments, generating diverse processes of articulation within the Church, contributing to a global view of the Amazonia as a whole, as a great biome, a great territory without borders. RESSOP participates in synodality of the various efforts from the educational field in an intercultural perspective, and of strengthening for a greater impact and interaction with territorial public policies. By the year 2024, the Amazon University Program (PUAM) has taken on the challenge of implementing a community learning center, which has been establishing strategic alliances with institutions of academic trajectory and positioning to accredit and certify its higher technical education programs.

PUAM was born as a response to the educational, cultural, social and ecological challenges in the Amazonian territory, it articulates and generates higher education processes with an intercultural approach, from the territorial proximity to the peripheries, attending to the educational challenges present in the peoples of the Panamazonian region; "... it assumes a liberating, itinerant, popular and dynamic pedagogy that is based on close, permanent and active listening to and with the identified priority individuals. In this way, the educational offer will be able to add existing processes and experiences, and thus respond more effectively to the needs and urgency identified by the communities in order to develop emerging and transformative proposals.

As Dominican Family we are called to live this Amazonian and universal ecclesial itinerary as a transforming force of profound witness of synodality, renewed commitment and solidarity, to join efforts and possibilities of collaboration that make possible the attention to the formative needs of young students and women of native peoples who yearn to access opportunities of a higher technical education such as PUAM, favoring intercultural education experiences from the contribution of their own contexts and community processes.



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SOURCE: MDR Photo Archive - Presentation by Sister Zully Rojas.

Additional statistical data:

The study conducted by the IIPE established that the **gaps on learning outcomes** in RESSOP schools are extreme with respect to the regional and national gap. This means that there are inequalities or gaps in opportunities for the rural population to access a quality education that ensures lifelong learning. Table 01 indicates that students in Atalaya schools have the highest gaps in satisfactory level for Reading, Mathematics, and Science and Technology with 98.3%.



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Which means that only 1.7% of students achieved satisfactory level learning on the 2019 Censal Assessment.

Table 01 - Learning achievement gap Satisfactory level for students in the province of Atalaya

AREA	ATALAYA	REGIONAL	NATIONAL
Reading	98.1%	95.2%	85.5%
Mathematics	98.2%	95.3%	82.3%
Science and Technology	98.7%	96.3%	90.3%
Media	98.3%	95.6%	86.0%

Source: Prepared by the UARM team, based on SICRECE Publication (2020) National Learning Achievement Assessments 2019.

The gap in appropriate infrastructure capacity of RESSOP schools is also of concern. This indicator includes operating connections, electricity networks, potable water system and sewerage network. Table 02 shows that the Echarate and Megantoni districts, in the province of La Convención (Cusco), are located in the RESSOP schools that have larger gaps than the provincial, departmental and national gaps. What is alarming is that there are no high schools with adequate infrastructure in the aforementioned districts. Likewise, it can be affirmed that primary schools reach an insignificant percentage of 0.4% of schools that would have an adequate infrastructure. While early education schools reach 9.5% of schools, an unflattering percentage.

Table 02 - Adequate Infrastructure Gap in RESSOP Schools of the Cusco Province.

District	LEVEL		
	Elementary	Primary	Secondary



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Echarate	88.9 %	99.1%	100.00 %
Megantoni	92.0 %	100.00 %	100.00 %
District Average	90.5%	99.6%	100.00%
Province of La Convencion	93.3%	98.7%	96.3%
Cusco Region	93.6%	96.0%	91.8%
National	89.7%	94.9%	89.0%

Source: Prepared by the UARM team, based on the National Education Infrastructure Plan - 2018 Monitoring Database and the 2018 School Census.

Internet connectivity is limited or very low in the areas where RESSOP schools are located. This aspect reflects the structural reality of rural schools in the Amazonia region.

Table 04 shows that the dropout rate in the four provinces where RESSOP intervenes is always higher than the dropout rate in Metropolitan Lima. Of all of them, school dropout rates in the province of Atalaya (Ucayali) are the most alarming. For example, in 2018-2019, the aforementioned province obtained a dropout rate of 10.9% compared to Metropolitan Lima's dropout rate of 3.0%. Consequently, Atalaya's dropout rate exceeds more than three times Metropolitan Lima's dropout rate, which is characterized by being purely urban.

Table 03 – Interannual dropout rate from 2013 to 2019, according to secondary schools in the provinces where RESSOP intervenes and comparison with the dropout rate of Metropolitan Lima.

INTERANNUAL YEAR	TAMBOPATA	MANU	ATALAYA	LA CONVENCION	METROPOLITAN LIMA
2013-2014	7.0%	6.5%	11.1%	5.3%	4.4%
2014-2015	5.3%	5.5%	9.3%	5.0%	3.5%
2015-2016	5.4%	3.1%	10.9%	5.6%	3.6%
2016-2017	5.6%	4.5%	9.1%	4.9%	3.6%
2017-2018	5.4%	4.0%	9.8%	5.0%	3.5%
2018-2019	4.0%	4.9%	10.9%	4.8%	3.0%



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Source: Educational Institution Management Support Information System (SIAGIE) 2020
<https://obepe.org/covid-19/desafios-ante-el-retorno-a-la-presencialidad-educativa-en-lasescuelasrurales-amazonicas-de-la-ressop/>

1.2.

EDUCATIONAL REALITY IN THE BOLIVIAN AMAZON

SHADOWS

In the last two decades, the Bolivian government has considered the importance of Bolivian youth as a central element for the country's development. In this regard, regulations favorable to the youth were approved at the national and departmental levels, such as:

Law No. 3845 of May 2, 2008, on Ratification of the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth; The Political Constitution of the State recognizes in particular the social and economic rights of youth expressed in articles 48 and 59; Youth Law No. 342 of February 5, 2013, and its regulation through Supreme Decree (DS) No. 1893; Departmental youth laws in La Paz, Chuquisaca, Cochabamba, Tarija, Pando and Beni, and local laws in some municipalities.

Although there have been important advances in the legal framework favorable to the youth, there are still many problems and difficulties for this sector of the Amazonian population that are not being addressed. Delving into the specific analysis of the situation of youth in the departments of the Bolivian Amazonia region, Pando and Beni, which also have departmental laws passed in 2015 and 2017 respectively, we sustain that the exercise of the rights of Amazonian youth continues to be a challenge, as national regulations have not had an impact on improving their quality of life. At the same time, departmental regulations are not progressing in their regulation, which prevents the approval of public policies and therefore nullifies public investment to meet their proposals.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE), projections for the young population (16 to 28 years old) are that by 2020 in the departments of Pando and Beni it will represent 24%, almost a quarter of the population living in the Bolivian Amazonia region. Some 20% (17% male and 24% female) of rural youth have primary education as their highest level of education, the majority (63%) have secondary education as their highest level of education, and only 11% have university and technical studies as their highest level of education (according to the INE household survey, 2017).

In terms of employment, 49.5% (79% men and 21% women) have an employment, of which the main occupations are self-employed and unpaid domestic worker. In the latter, youth represent 73%, of which 77% are men and 23% are women. Regarding average remuneration, men receive Bs 2,603.8 while women receive Bs 1,832.81, with a gender gap in income of 0.70. Youth employment in urban centers is usually carried out in the service and commerce sectors.



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Regarding poverty, in Bolivia, 58.2% of young people living in poverty are indigenous, 67.8% live in rural areas and 51.5% are women (ECLAC - UNFPA, 2011). This confirms the vulnerability of the rural and indigenous population.

In this context, is youth relevant and strategic for national and departmental authorities?

Among the concerns of Amazonian youth are those related to employment generation, respect for their cultural manifestations and access to higher education systems that are adapted to their geographic, economic and cultural reality. In the words of Walter Moy, president of the Organization of Mojeño Indigenous Youth (OJIM): *"the youth of our department have greater difficulties in accessing higher education, because the educational centers are in Trinidad and in the city everything runs on money, most of the jobs that exist there are not compatible with the studies..."*.

On the one hand, considering that Amazonian youth have their own indigenous and rural particularities, it is necessary to strengthen their leading role in demanding their rights at the community, territorial and regional levels. The youth consider that adult-centrism and marginalization for women's participation in organic life are a fact of life and create difficulties for them. In other words, many adults still think that young people have no contribution to make, that they lack ideas and therefore denigrate or ignore their realities, aspirations and proposals. Specifically, it is necessary to achieve complementarity between young people and adults in various areas that contribute to improving the quality of life for all.

Another regional proposal is to work on the regulation of the departmental laws of Pando and Beni, as well as the municipal youth laws. However, while legal regulations are only an important part of this, their existence per se does not guarantee the enforcement of rights. In order to generate changes in the lives of Amazonian youth, it is necessary to develop actions in several areas, with various actors and at all levels of government.

These advances will allow the youth to raise their concerns and proposals, and for these to be taken into account and attended to with the allocation of economic resources; in the meantime, the youth will continue to be neglected by the State. (Cabrera, 2020).

LIGHTS:

Methodological proposals by the Episcopal Conference on education in Bolivia with a global educational agreement based on the synod of the Amazon and education in Bolivia.

Promoting interest in recording stories of people who live in the lowlands or who come from there, the grandchildren can record the stories of the elders and can systematize them in schools, high school students can reflect on the visions of their traditions reflected in the stories, poetry and prose that come from the Amazonian territory.

To teach students to contemplate, to teach them to see nature, this can be done through projects where they can photograph nature, flowers, animals, leaves, etc. And prepare exhibitions so that others can contemplate this beauty. For this first step the pope himself says, let us not have a utilitarian gaze, let us have a contemplative gaze.

Another important aspect is the promotion of activities that make them take responsibility for the care of the environment. These activities are complementary, if we love nature, we cannot destroy it, nor can we harm it. This is not an attitude of respect either for nature or for others, respect is not only for nature, but also for other people and animals. (Rocha, 2021)



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Jóvenes de la Amazonía boliviana en el olvido



Archive photo CIPAC BENI

Lic. Madelen James.
Dominican Youth Movement

1.3. EDUCATIONAL REALITY IN THE VENEZUELAN AMAZON

The educational system in Venezuela is in a severe state of deterioration in all aspects, in terms of infrastructure, according to the Community Learning Center for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (Centro Comunitario De Aprendizaje, por los Derechos de la Niñez y Adolescencia CECODAP), 53% of the schools report structural failures. Despite multiple official announcements from the Military Community Brigades for Education and Health (Brigadas Comunitarias Militares para la Educación y la Salud BRICOMILES), the Venezuelan Program for Human Rights Education Action (Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos PROVEA) was only able to register reports of restoration in 1,845 schools, representing just 6.3% of the total number of public schools, according to the latest official data (2018). This, in addition to low salaries and little or no school supplies in educational institutions, makes education in this country difficult.

In public education the decline is so great that there are desertions on both sides, teachers and students. Transportation, fuel costs, means of transportation and the deterioration of roads, especially in remote areas such as the Venezuelan Amazonia, is also one of the challenges for education to be a quality service. This difficult reality is even harsher in the indigenous communities and traditional communities of the Venezuelan Amazonia where in many parts, education has been lost altogether and teachers have dedicated themselves to other tasks including mining.



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The Catholic Church, in the midst of the existing difficulties, is one of the greatest hopes for the people of the Amazonia, since the population seeks refuge, accompaniment, formation and teachings through the Gospel, which other institutions do not provide, especially if it is about different cultures, which coexist in a city but that many times the inhabitants do not know how to tolerate, it is there, where our local Church helps to discover the face of a living, humble, charitable God, who teaches to live with love and tolerance.

SHADOWS:

- Students drop out of school at all levels of the educational system due to lack of means of transportation, poor nutrition, as well as the desertion of the teaching staff because the salary they earn is not enough to cover their basic needs, which is why they are forced to go to the mines or migrate to other countries.
- The absence of bilingual schools in the different indigenous territories, which results in a slower learning pace.
- There are no resources in the schools, much less training and continuous support for teachers, especially for those who are not specialized, added to this the constant change in the guidelines of the Ministry of Education regarding how the education system works, and the few or no answers in reference to salary improvements for teachers, this produces tension and uncertainty in the population.

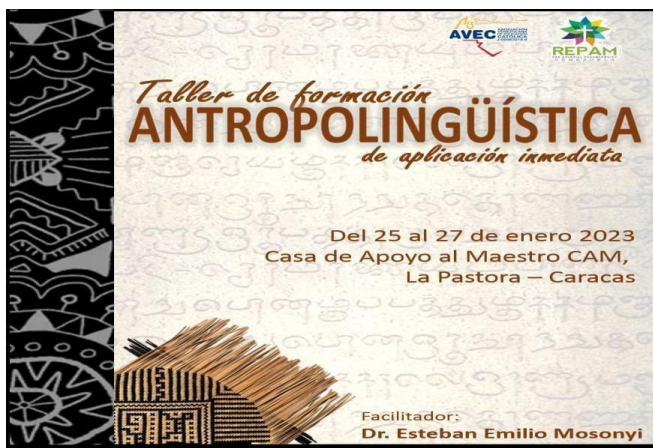
LIGHTS:

- Positive presence of Catholic Education through religious congregations, and the association with anthropologists and linguists for the production of didactic resources such as primers, books in indigenous languages, dictionaries, respecting and preserving their identity and culture, knowing their languages which keep alive the memories of the native peoples.
- The foundation and strengthening of research centers, indigenous pastoral and educational projects of the Church that promote the strengthening of cultures, indigenous languages and ancestral practices.
- Opportunities for higher education and technical education in the local territories for those young people who wish to continue their education, with family as a key player in education.



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- Joint work between the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM) Venezuela and the Venezuelan Association of Catholic Education (AVEC), who have jointly conducted courses and workshops on anthropolinguistics, recycling workshops, care of the common home and integral ecology.
- There is a very important solidarity movement in the country, some organizations provide donations to students or institutions, which together with the support and contribution of parents and guardians, together with the commitment of many teachers work to ensure the education of many children and young people who are the future of the country.



Original pictures from REPAM VENEZUELA

DREAMS:

- We dream of creating an organization of Catholic Teachers to approach educational centers in order to train and motivate students from an early age to recover values, rescue their culture, preserve the environment, provide religious formation, among others.
- We dream of an education that does not impose an ideology, but one that comprehensively educates for life, having as integrating parts of this system the community, the family, the state and society, that is to say, a quality education which is the right of every Venezuelan.
- We dream of promoting professions that have a direct or indirect connection with nature, for example: professionals in agricultural industries, agroforestry leaders or leaders, graduates in Agricultural Sciences, among others; this with the goal of promoting the values of care and recovery of the Amazonian land.



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- We dream of a bilingual intercultural education that empowers indigenous peoples for a better quality of life, continuity of their culture, respect for their human and territorial rights and their ancestral practices.



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Caracas, August 2023