**NINTH REGULAR MEETING OF** OEA/Ser.W/XIII.6.9

**THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION** CIDI/CIE/doc. 8/21

November 18-19, 2021 17 November 2021 Washington, D.C., United States of America Original: Spanish

VIRTUAL

**PROGRESS REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE WORK PLAN OF THE**

**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION (PTCIE) 2019-2022 AND RESOLUTION AG/RES. 2955 (L-O/20) – OPERATIVE PARAGRAPHS 21-23/26)**

**SYSTEMATIZATION OF EDUCATION-HEALTH INTERSECTORAL DIALOGUES**

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SYSTEMATIZATION OF EDUCATION-HEALTH INTERSECTORAL DIALOGUES

# PROMOTING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTHY NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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| **Event:** Intersectoral Dialogue on “Promoting School Environments, Healthy Eating, and Physical Activity” | **Date:** November 30, 2020 |
| **Objective:** Share some of the experiences on the promotion, monitoring, and evaluation of school environments conducive to healthy eating and physical activity among representatives from the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education. | |
| **Participant Countries:** Antigua and Barbuda-Argentina-Brazil-Chile-Colombia-Costa Rica-Cuba-Dominica-Dominican Republic-Ecuador-El Salvador-Grenada-Guatemala-Guyana-Honduras-Jamaica-Nicaragua-Panama-Paraguay-Peru-Trinidad and Tobago-Uruguay-Saint Kitts and Nevis-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines-Suriname | |
| **Panel: Exploring National and Sub-Regional Initiatives for Promoting School Environments, Healthy Eating, and Physical Activity:**   * Brazil: Dr. Karine Dos Santos, General Coordinator of the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) * CARPHA: Dr. Christine Bocage, Senior Technical Officer, Food Nutrition and Security * Chile: Mr. Matías Portela, Division of Healthy Public Policies and Promotion (DIPOL), Ministry of Health * Colombia: Danit Torres Fuentes, Quality Director for Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education * Costa Rica: José Leonardo Sanchez Hernández, Director of Equity programs of the Ministry of Education. | |
| **Organized by:** Pan American Health Organization Department of Non-communicable Deceases (PAHO-NDCS) and Organization of American States-InterAmerican Committee on Education (OAS / CIE) | |

The intersectoral dialogue between officials from Ministries of Health and Education on the topic: **“Promoting School Environments, Healthy Eating, and Physical Activity”** was held on November 30th, 2020, led in a collaborative effort between the Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NCDS) of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment of the Organization of American States (OAS) as the technical secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) under the framework of project #4 on the CIE Work Plan 2019-2022. This event was attended by high-level officials designated by their Ministries of Education and the Ministries of Health from 24 participating countries. The event took place simultaneously in English and Spanish and lasted approximately three hours.

The purpose of this event was to share some of the experiences on the promotion, monitoring, and evaluation of school environments conducive to healthy eating and physical activity among representatives from the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education. This space for public policies and programmatic exchanges on the subject offered a starting point to know and expand the possibilities of attention that can be configured for the design of future policies on improving school environments.

The activity began with the welcome and opening remarks by Mary Lou Valdez, Deputy Director of PAHO, and Kim Osborne, Executive Secretary of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) at the OAS. Afterward, the conversation was framed through the participation of Jovan Reid, First Secretary Embassy of Barbados to the United States & Permanent Mission of Barbados to the OAS, Leo Nederveen, Advisor Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity in Schools of PAHO, and Jesus Schucry Giacoman Zapata, Director of the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment DDHEE of OAS.

The event included a panel discussion where lessons learned from initiatives undertaken by some Member States sparked the discussion on key topics such as school feeding programs, the promotion of physical activity, and some recommendations for nutrition standards that have already been used. The event also included three working groups, where participants discussed success factors and challenges in implementing policies and interventions in improving school environments for healthy eating and physical activity.

This document complies with and summarizes the contributions and exchange of ideas generated in this virtual meeting. In this document, the knowledge shared at this event was structured into four sections: Panel, breakout discussions, conclusions, and next steps. It should be noted that the contributions made by participant countries in the panel and breakout discussions are presented following an alphabetical order in this document.

**Panel: Exploring National and Sub-Regional Initiatives for Promoting School Environments, Healthy Eating, and Physical Activity**

* **Brazil:** National School Feeding Program (PNAE) - Dr. Karine Dos Santos, General Coordinator of the Program

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| **Highlighted contributions:** Universal Health Care Coverage, family farming, partnerships and intersectorality with other Ministries and institutions, guidelines and standards for supply and purchase of food, legal protection in times of pandemic. |

Brazil expressed that the National School Feeding Program is a structured public policy with universal coverage in 27 states. It benefits more than 40 million students with more than 50 million meals a day. This program is an initiative that is part of the food policy in Brazil and part of the work on the prevention of overweight and obesity in students. The policy works with the collaboration of the federal government, states, and municipalities.

The guidelines of the program include the human right to adequate food, a healthy and adequate diet, food and nutritional education for the promotion of healthier eating habits, the universality of the service, social control, and the support for sustainable development through family farming. Concerning family farming, at least 30% of any budget that is transferred from the federal government to subnational entities must be earmarked for family farming. This is established due to the understanding that family farming gives the possibility of offering students healthier, fresher foods and develops the local economy.

Brazil highlighted the Resolution CD/FNDE no. 26/2013 on healthy essential foods including family farming and supply of fruits and vegetables and prohibition of the supply of food with low nutritional value, and the Resolution CD/FNDE No. 6/2020 on fresh, minimally processed, processed, ultra-processed foods and culinary ingredients, as innovative policies of the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE). In addition, there are guiding documents of the PNAE such as the dietary food-based dietary guidelines for the Brazilian population, the PAHO/WHO Nutrient Profile Model, the food/based guidelines for Brazilian children under 2 years old, and the milestone of Food and Nutrition Education for Public Policies.

The standards that regulate the supply and purchase of food are: 1 - at least 75% of the budget must be used to buy fresh or minimally processed foods; 2- at most, 20% can be used to buy processed and ultra-processed foods; 3- a maximum of 5% can be used to buy processed culinary ingredients. In addition, it is recommended that at least 50 different types of fresh or minimally processed foods be purchased annually by the municipalities.

On the other hand, guidelines have been established that provide legal protection for the PNAE in times of the pandemic, making the law and the resolution that rule it more flexible. This is the case of Law No. 13.987/2020, Resolution no. 02/2020, the Guidance Manual – FNDE/MAPA, questions and answers on the FNDE website, and the return of the PNAE protocol to return to face-to-face classes.

One of the greatest challenges for the implementation of this public policy for food and nutrition security provided by the PNAE program is intersectorality since the Ministry of Education must work with other ministries such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Planning, Health, Agriculture and Citizenship, as well as with universities.

Additionally, Brazil shared a link with more detailed information and documentation about the program: [www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae](http://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/pnae/)

* **Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA):** Development of Technical Recommendations for the Development of Nutrition Standards for Caribbean Schools - Dr. Christine Bocage, Senior Technical Officer, Food Nutrition and Security.

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| **Highlighted contributions:** reformulation of popular recipes, regional guidelines adapted to the national level, the importance of nutrition labeling and front-of-package labeling, mandatory nutrition standards for food providers, intersectorality. |

CARPHA as a regional public health agency in the Caribbean shared insights on the development of technical recommendations for promoting nutrition standards in Caribbean schools. These standards were developed due to challenges such as the double burden of malnutrition, nutrition transition linked to the demographic and epidemiological transition, ultra-processed products widely available and frequently at lower prices than more wholesome foods, decreasing consumption of fruits, vegetables, ground provisions, and legumes, and increasing consumption of fatty, salty, and sugary foods, as well as few Caribbean initiatives to address labeling standards and nutrition guidelines.



In this sense, CARPHA 6.2 standards establish as mandatory the development of national nutrition standards for all food providers and food sold in schools and early childhood services, based on a generic subregional guideline. The implementation of these recommendations will be supported by interventions that improve the regulatory environment of foods through the development of regional standards for nutrition labeling and front-of-package labeling.

CARPHA first launched a model in 2016 recommended to use in the development of policies and strategies that promote healthy eating and prevent obesity and NCDs and these recommendations were developed for Caribbean schools to develop national guidance for food providers. Within the guidelines, countries are supposed to develop their regulations based on the recommendations. These should include the importance of healthy eating for children, reformulation of popular recipes, corresponding serving size used in the Caribbean, an appendix with the sugar content of popular drinks available in the country, an appendix with a selection of foods with high sugar, and sodium content, among others.

The development process of these recommendations started with determining nutrient and meal standards for schools which were determined after a 2-day Regional Workshop in November 2019 jointly organized by CARPHA and PAHO. This workshop had the participation of Ministries of Health, Ministries of Education, and academia. The output of the workshop was a draft recommendation and a working group to finalize a document based on the most recent evidence.

The main criteria used for the recommendation are the PAHO Nutrient Profile Model criteria for pre-packaged processed and ultra-processed foods and a combination of the Population Nutrient Intake Goals for the Caribbean, the Recommended Nutrient Intakes for the Caribbean, and Food-based Dietary Guidelines criteria for meals prepared from fresh foods and mixed ingredients. These technical considerations can be used to guide recipe development for prepared food items, taking into consideration cooking methods and the addition of salt, sugar, and fat and to help countries prepare guidelines for use by persons or entities providing food to schools. Users should review the nutrition facts labels of processed and ultra-processed foods against cut-offs to determine if these products can be sold within the school environment.

Among the challenges in the development of these standards, CARPHA included the lack of food labels, the often-used combination of foods, portion sizes for various age groups that are not practical or affordable, different exchange lists across reference materials, and the application of the nutrient standards for processed foods, especially the sodium standard, resulting in eliminating many foods. Consequently, there is a need for reformulation and information on the nutrient composition of some Caribbean foods.

* **Chile:** Physical Activity Promotion in Schools – Mr. Matías Portela, Division of Healthy Public Policies and Promotion (DIPOL), Ministry of Health.

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| **Highlighted contributions:** intersectorality, the gender gap in physical activity rates, physical activity goal of 60-minutes a day, students’ interest in physical activity. |

Chile started their presentation by highlighting that the sedentary culture is one of the challenges the country is facing in the last 10 years. Chile had a pre –COVID-19 diagnosis which determined the impact of physical inactivity in the schools. This report indicated challenges, such as the lack of encouragement to practice physical activity in the family environment, with students not performing any form of physical activity at all and, with increasing percentages of inactivity as students grow, and a gender gap as well.

To face these challenges, the Ministry of Health has promoted a policy in school settings applying a health-in-all-policies approach. Chile also stated that the levels of a sedentary lifestyle are correlated - what happens in the life of adults is influenced by what happened in childhood. It is also recognized that the inactivity of children is a public health problem and schools play a major role. Moreover, intersectorality between ministries of sport, education, housing, health and social development, and family has been a key component in Chile through the system “Elige vivir sano”. Allies in this system also include municipalities, public and private institutions, as well as academia.

During the pandemic, measures were taken to reduce the growth of sedentary lifestyles and physical inactivity, considering pre-existing challenges. Chile has been able to incorporate public health in all policies. Other actions include the dissemination of physical education classes on national television channels, videos for children, guides for physical education teachers, and materials for children to preserve good sleep habits and reduction of screens time. It was highlighted that it has been a complex situation due to quarantine time. Chile also expressed that in a survey students expressed that not having to sit all day in the classroom is an element they want to see incorporated in face-to-face classes. As a goal, Chile aims at a minimum of 60 minutes a day of moderately vigorous physical activity in the most inclusive way possible.

In terms of fundamental pillars for active school environments, Chile shared six elements: reinforce physical education and health in the curriculum; strengthen educational management of the administrative and teaching body; promote good habits and healthy lifestyles; incorporate a complementary offer within establishments and put emphasis on the complete cycle of teaching and intersectoral work. Intersectoral work was highlighted as essential to improve the quality of life and well-being of children and adolescents.

Additionally, Chile shared a link with more detailed information and documentation about their initiative: <https://dipol.minsal.cl/departamentos-2/promocion-de-la-salud-y-participacion-ciudadana/actividad-fisica-y-plazas-saludables/>

* **Colombia:** Experiences in Promoting Healthy Lifestyles - Danit Torres Fuentes, Quality Director for the Quality Director for Preschool, Basic and Secondary Education of the Ministry of Education.

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| **Highlighted contributions:** emphasis on the development of competencies and skills, integration of physical activity and healthy habits in the curriculum, toolbox for promoting healthy living, inclusiveness, and citizenship. |

Colombia’s experience in the promotion of healthy lifestyles is based on the development of competencies and skills for social-emotional development for autonomous, informed, and responsible decision-making regarding individual, collective, and environmental health care. The Ministry of Education seeks to propose activities that contribute to the development of the curriculum in order to strengthen those competencies in children and adolescents by articulating issues starting from the pedagogy and the curriculum. Under this framework, the School Feeding Unit is also included.

Colombia shared insights on their integrative initiative which promotes social-emotional development, ensuring human rights and the construction of an ethical, democratic, and inclusive citizenship of children and adolescents, that allows them to consolidate their life projects and complete their educational trajectories, within the framework of co-responsibility with their families, school, and society.

This approach contemplates care and self-care, social-emotional development or emotions for life, school coexistence, and citizenship. The care and self-care framework includes the promotion of healthy lifestyles and involves healthy eating, physical activity, and good hygiene practices. This framework covers four major areas:

1. Management and articulation of processes, intersectoral plans, coverage of education secretaries, public policies, regulation of school stores, among others.
2. Training that includes pre-and post-surveys, a toolbox for promoting healthy living, kits for the development of physical activity, initiatives through radio and TV in times of pandemic, and working with the Ministry of Sport
3. Communication and mobilization
4. Evidence generation

Considering Colombia’s pedagogical approach to healthy lifestyles, the new curricular reference of physical education, recreation, and sport was shared, as a component of public policy and aiming at associating physical activity and healthy lifestyles with the curricular proposal of Colombia. Actions taken during the pandemic include massive distribution of materials, intersectoral work, the process of self-training to dynamic groups, among others.

* **Costa Rica:** School and Adolescent Food and Nutrition Program (PANEA) - José Leonardo Sanchez Hernández. Director of Equity programs of the Ministry of Education.

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| **Highlighted contributions:** universal coverage, program sustainability, lack of specialists and nutritionists, involvement of students in the school orchards, integration with the local economy, prioritizing vulnerable populations, increasing feeding times. |

Costa Rica’s PANEA school meal program has two main objectives. The first is related to health by contributing to the maintenance of the nutritional status of the student population, especially from 6 to 18 years old. The second objective is educational-cultural and seeks to promote the development of adequate and permanent habits, as well as practices, knowledge, attitudes, and skills on healthy, safe, nutritious, and varied eating. The strategies implemented to achieve the objectives of the PANEA program include 5 axes:

1. Universalization process. In this sense, the program is already reaching 95% of the country's public educational centers. The main challenge is related to the resources and sustainability of the program, especially in the context of the pandemic.
2. Comprehensive investment. This includes food, cooks, equipment, and school orchards for integrating the student in the food harvesting process.
3. Implementation of a new menu adjusted to the conditions and needs of the different groups, manuals and recipe books, and technical specifications. The challenge in this implementation is in terms of education and awareness as well as the lack of specialists and nutritionists to ensure that the menu is implemented in the best way.
4. Increasing feeding times to two or three, according to the amount of time the student spends in the school. For this, Costa Rica started with extended hours centers in areas of high poverty, indigenous territories, and scattered rural areas. The challenge is how to reach more than 80% of centers since currently only 35% have been reached.
5. Integration of the program with agriculture and local economy. To accomplish this, there is an alliance with the National Production Council CNP, which is a public institution. This alliance seeks to integrate small and medium-sized local producers to sell their products to state institutions through the Institutional Supply Program. The challenge is expanding this supply, which currently covers 70% to 100% of the public centers by 2023.

**Breakout Groups Discussions: Sharing National Perspectives on the Promotion of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in School Environments**

After the panelist presentations, the next section of the event was intended to present the perspectives from authorities in the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education from the participant countries. Officials and specialists from the different ministries working on this topic exchanged in three breakout groups their experiences and opinions regarding the challenges faced, lessons learned, and recommendations, especially in the context of COVID-19. Below are detailed - in alphabetical order (by country) - the contributions made during the event by officials. These contributions were focused on the following questions:

1. What strategies is your country working on to promote healthy eating and physical activity in the school environment?
2. What strategies is your country adopting to overcome the challenges?

Highlighted contributions per discussion group:

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| **Group #1 Discussion** | |
| **Highlighted Challenges**   * Lack of data for distinct age groups * COVID-19 pandemic has put a hold on pilot programs and activities as some funds have been diverted for COVID-19 efforts from a political standpoint * Finding ways to keep the ministries engaged while at the same time keeping up with the changes set forth by changes in the government. | **Highlighted Lessons and Outcomes**   * Keeping crucial conversations afloat while building awareness between interest groups * Linking nutrition policies to frameworks * Including teachers and children as stakeholders * Using virtual resources during the COVID-19 pandemic * Continuing to keep conversations afloat between groups as well as build awareness between interest groups. |
| **Group #2 Discussion** | |
| **Highlighted Challenges**   * Programs, strategies, recommendations, and mandates should address physical activity and nutrition and should be observed from the same perspective * Communication should entail community participation * Seeking support from international organizations * Fostering training for teachers and expanding school curriculum * Focusing on the intersectorality between education, health, agriculture, social security, environment, cities, housing, etc. | **Highlighted Lessons and Outcomes**   * Using laws and regulatory frameworks is essential to transform school environments into spaces for the promotion and protection of life, including the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity, restrictions set forth by front-of-pack-labeling regulations * Establishing best standards for healthy eating by following evidence-based research, community participation is essential as well as an adequate infrastructure (e.g., school gardens, spaces for physical activity). |
| **Group #3 Discussion** | |
| **Highlighted Challenges**   * Strengthening intersectorality * Implementing programs in rural areas * Addressing commercial determinants of health, finance, and resources, changes in the government, many schools lack services * Investigating technological adaptability. | **Highlighted Lessons and Outcomes**   * Addressing the menus being made by specialists and that respond to production within an established context * Mobilization for cultural foods and healthy eating * Guidelines for purchases of food products * Guidelines for school-aged children who live in indigenous communities * Training programs for teachers, preparation of dietary guidelines. |

Experiences of the participating countries:

***Antigua and Barbuda***highlighted that among the strategies to promote healthy eating and physical activity, the Ministry of Education has a school meals program that caters to all the government primary schools. This program is intended to be expanded but this has not happened yet because of funding. They also expressed healthy students lead to better academic performance.

In terms of healthy eating, the school meal program is available for all government schools. Even though school meals are free, if children are financially able, they will eat something else. Antigua and Barbuda is trying to make healthier offerings and has worked with vending providers to improve the quality of what they are selling. They are also trying to create programs to confront obesity and efforts are being made to include nutrition and physical activity knowledge in the curriculum. They are working towards a collective approach.

Other strategies include a wellness committee in charge of streamlining the response/policy in Antigua and Barbuda and the “Medical Benefits Scheme”, which is a state institution that deals with NCDs and physical activity in schools to prevent diabetes and hypertension. Antigua and Barbuda’s parliament also approved a ban on sugary drinks and beverages, and a new round of educational activity should be coming out shortly considering all the previous mentioned things.

Additionally, a study has been carried out by a master’s student about the psychological effects of physical activity in schools. Antigua and Barbuda offered to share this article which was published in a journal.

**Argentina** stated that they are working at several levels, including legislative in order to achieve a front-of-package labeling law. The goal is to work with equity in healthy education. Food guidelines for the Argentine population (GAPA) have also been provided and an analysis of different nutrient profiles and their level of agreement with these guidelines has been carried out.

A positive change has been the change of management since the previous one that worked with a program with a slightly limited vision (obesogenic environments only), all the emphasis was on reducing obesity. Today it demands a broader look: food and physical activity, diversity, gender-based violence, potable water.

Regarding education, Argentina has worked in several courses: virtual, education to health teams, and with a comprehensive approach to noncommunicable diseases. A Course for teachers to promote healthy eating has been provided and 1,500 teachers attended. Courses were also held for personnel working in canteens. Additionally, Argentina has provided courses in environments or contexts of confinement, and physical activity has been added.

On the other hand, Argentina stated that this situation has been an opportunity for families to get closer to the health system since there are still people who suffer from chronic malnutrition and require a more personalized and comprehensive approach.

In terms of communication, they worked on communication with the provinces in the "days of", to encourage physical activity as a fundamental axis to promote Health in all policies. Work is being done on a manual with successful experiences at the local level to be recognized at the national level. Argentina expressed that the pandemic context does not impede continuing with physical activity plans.

Argentina highlighted that they are mostly listening and learning from the very enriching experiences shared in the event. In terms of initiatives for the promotion of physical activity and nutrition, three provinces have passed healthy environment laws which is a significant breakthrough. From the National Ministries, the general guidelines are established, in which several organisms are involved, including the Ministry of Social Development that manages the budget of national canteens. There is a general guideline of Argentina’s government, which has to do with the fight against hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. From there, several policies and guidelines have been established to increase the resources of school canteens and provide healthy food. Additionally, specific guidelines for children are currently being developed by the Ministry of Health, for example, the Healthy School Environments Guide with recommendations, including everything that has to do with food nutrition.

Argentina has also been working with an inter-ministerial working group and is drafting a resolution that provides the framework for a National Healthy Environments Strategy (ENES). Regarding the restructuring of the ENES, although Argentina’s population surveys alarm them about the increase in obesity and overweight, due to a specific request from the provinces, which are concerned about the consumption of tobacco and alcohol in children and adolescents, they have decided to intervene in educational environments in a comprehensive way (covering 8 axes). The restructuring is carried out from a rights approach, where it is prioritized citizen participation in general. Argentina proposes an intersectoral work, within the Ministry of Health and outside it, finding key the articulation with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, social development; and from now on, the provinces and municipalities.

Argentina has the particularity of being a federal country and its provinces have autonomy in terms of the health and education system. From the nation, several guidelines have been established including social development for school canteens. There is a new general guideline that is related to the fight against malnutrition and states that the food provided in school canteens should be accessible, safe, and with good nutrients. Regarding challenges, nutrition and physical activity are the two great challenges in the new development of the guidelines. The focus is expanding not only with obesity and overweight but also with other forms of malnutrition as a component that affects the population in Argentina.

Regarding physical activity programs, several virtual meetings and training were held during the pandemic. Other initiatives include the creation of a training course for teachers and food handlers, within the framework of the national nutrition policy, and through intersectoral work with various ministries (education, culture, etc.). Health promotion is done through regulatory policies. Argentina worked on the advice for front-of-package labeling, in a way that can be intervened in school environments, with clear objectives and based on evidence.

In Argentina, a bill to promote healthy eating is being discussed in the Chamber of Deputies, which includes front-of-package warning labeling, incorporating PAHO nutrient profiles, and also includes the regulation of marketing, promotion, and sponsorship of processed and ultra-processed foods and beverages and the regulation of healthy school environments, prohibiting the sale and distribution of food containing at least one stamp within schools, and including of food and nutrition education in the school curriculum.

***Brazil*** expressed that they have three departments working with health and physical education issues: the coordination of food and nutrition, the coordination of health in school, and the coordination of physical activity. For food security, Brazil has food guidelines and guidelines to be able to develop in schools, although this is a challenge in Brazil regarding regulations. Brazil is also developing a healthy eating plan in schools. In terms of strategies, there is a significant number, however, they have several challenges in terms of development.

Brazil stated that monitoring children's nutritional status and food consumption is very important. For this, they have an electronic system to track nutritional status. In the health program in schools, which is an intersectoral action between education and health, primary care teams take actions to promote health, and among the topics are physical activity and healthy eating. The Ministry of Health gives funds to implement it in more than 5000 municipalities.

Another action is the program Growing Up Healthy ("Crecer Saludable") which is an initiative funded by the federal government to prevent childhood obesity in schools. Actions are taken to promote healthy eating and when children with obesity are identified, they are provided with the necessary care. There are also materials for teachers to do activities in schools to prevent obesity. There are dietary guidelines and soon physical activity guidelines as well, with a special chapter for physical activity in the school environment. Some cities and states have a regulation that does not allow harmful products to be marketed in schools. By 2021, Brazil will launch the National Plan to Prevent Childhood Obesity.

The challenge is implementation because there are more than five thousand municipalities. Also, in this issue of healthy eating, there is the challenge of facing the commercial determinants of health. Brazil is also working on the development of a National Plan for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity with a focus on cities, which includes actions for managers to develop at the local level, with a focus on environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. Financial resources from the federal government to support implementation are provided and new resources if the goals are met.

***Chile*** outlined the importance of intersectorality and stated that it is about coordinating the promotion of healthy living. For more than 10 years, the Ministry of Education has had a specific budget line to promote school physical activity in schools that receive state subsidies. It has combined the provision of sports equipment that is chosen from an online catalog and the incorporation of more physical activity and sports workshops. The hours allocated are few, as schooling grows, the number of hours decreases.

From the area of physical education in the Ministry of Education, more workshops in the afternoon where there is an optional schedule for them to choose to do physical activities have been promoted. This year it was promoted virtually but for the next one (2021), they already have 1500 sports workshops for 730 schools with a mix of face-to-face and virtual activities according to their reality.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Health expressed the focus on legislation that protects the environment because the school environment is vulnerable. In 2016, Chile approved the law on front-of-package labeling, the nutritional composition of foods, and marketing. Marketing is restricted for under-14s, and the Happy Meal and Tony the Tiger were pulled out. Chile is trying to protect the health of young people from being overweight and a multisectoral approach arises for stimulating the regular practice of physical activity. Additionally, within study centers, unhealthy foods are not sold.

Chile stated that they have a Counterweight Plan Model where strategies were generated for environments to promote healthy habits and physical activity is promoted to improve development in the human being. Challenges are to understand and identify good public policies and evaluate them, no inherence at the municipal level of the Ministry of Education and ensuring continuity in students' homes.

Chile also shared the [Decree 336 Regulating Support Resources for Sports and Recreation](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZDPOz3bOsxAzEXFEhrdfrjsTvg0BkgfC/view)[, Guidelines for School Physical Activity](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iQlQdrkBVYlZzOM1DyDT-btYjmOU4fXO/view), [Guidelines and Considerations for School Physical Activity in Pandemic](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hidmZ_fK2bnnq1SPc43Cj9WiJsSSRccE/view?usp=sharing), the [Didactic Guide for Remote Physical Education](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jl-yOnHzi6LkDYBmlf5dDyHRPTxo-N4y/view?usp=sharing), and a link with access to documentation on the subject: <https://www.curriculumnacional.cl/portal/Educacion-General/Educacion-fisica-y-salud/>

***Colombia*** expressed that since 2013, a partnership has been initiated with the support of UNICEF, the Ministry of Sport. In Colombia, there is no single curriculum, but each institution builds its pedagogical model, and the Ministry provides guidance. In the training component of this proposal, there are proposals for teachers, students, and families in the three axes: feeding, physical activity, and hygiene.

Colombia stated that it is also necessary to strengthen communication by linking families and didactic sequences, ideas, and alternatives to integrate other areas of study since all areas can contribute to healthy living. Another important element is the assessment and knowledge management to promote physical activity.

In terms of physical education teachers, in primary school there are no specialized teachers for each area, they are general education teachers. In secondary schools, the Ministry is already beginning to find these specialists which represents a huge challenge. Another challenge is the infrastructure of schools. In 2019, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education provided guidance to operate healthy stores in schools. One of the goals is to encourage healthier school store service. There is also a law for the prevention of NCDs, but it is not specific.

Regarding actions to promote healthy eating, Colombia, through the Special Administrative Unit for School Feeding - Food for Learning, shared that the School Feeding Program is conceived as a strategy for access to and permanence in the education system through the supply of food supplements. Colombia has a food context where there is deficit, overweight, and obesity. Colombia’s approach to the promotion of healthy eating is in the design of standard minutes that are articulated with the regulations: recommendations for nutrient intake for the Colombian population and the Dietary Guidelines for the Colombian Population over 2 years old.

Another strategy is that the menus are carried out by professionals in Nutrition and Dietetics of each Territorial Entity, under a decentralized operating model operated by entities from each region. They maintain culture, habits, and customs, hand in hand with the promotion of healthy eating, the menus are adapted to the gastronomy of the different country regions and include some guidelines for the acquisition of these foods. In addition, these guidelines make it possible to control sodium, fat, and sugar levels.

In coordination with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the document "Guidelines for the acquisition and preparation of healthy foods and their implementation in the contractual processes of state-run food assistance programs" was designed. Its objective is that the beneficiaries of the support and/or food supplementation programs can access a healthy diet that promotes health and prevents the appearance of non-communicable diseases.

There are PAE´s guidelines for indigenous communities, to implement their indigenous food plans where the use of products grown in the region and the forms of preparation typical of their culture are prioritized.

Colombia is also in the process of regulating school food kiosks. In addition, the importance of including guidance for school children who belong to ethnic communities was highlighted.

One of the challenges is the possibility of intersectoral work so necessary to be able to generate positive results not only in terms of prevention of overweight and obesity but also for the promotion of health. As a health sector, it is important that they sit down and talk with key actors (territorial secretariats, ministries of culture and sport, ministry of education, etc.).

Research, and how this from academia contributes to the formulation of public policy, was highlighted as an important component. The work with academia is to identify, for example, how to generate messages about healthy eating and the importance of practicing physical activity using discourses adapted to children and adolescents in the school environment. Other topics are the connection with the home and community environment, and other challenges such as food labeling and the regulation of marketing to children and young people.

Another important challenge with the School Feeding Program is to achieve the implementation of a school feeding model in rural areas, understanding the contexts different from urban areas, the mobilization of local economies, strengthening the link to family farming, and harmonization with the food culture strategy.

Other challenges include the promotion of physical activity that allows the development of skills within a curricular scheme.

***Costa Rica:*** Among the strategies implemented by Costa Rica for promoting healthy habits, they shared the National Development Plan for grades 1-6. This is an intersectoral action plan developed by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Social Security Fund.

Efforts are being made to promote physical activity and sport, support canteens, accompany physical and sanitary conditions at the local, regional, and national levels. Initiatives include the restriction of foods high in fat and sugar, the offer of fresh products, homemade preparations, and lower sales of packaged food. Additionally, school health and nutrition committees were created for public institutions. This program covers 100% of schools and the nutritional component is supported by the Ministry of Health.

Some of the challenges include that the school regulates the kiosks of the center, but there are sales outside. There is also the need to strengthen the school nutrition program, it is necessary to reconvert it and make it more comprehensive. There is also a need to increase coverage and improve actions. There is also a communication strategy, but resources for communication campaigns have been reduced due to COVID-19. It is being analyzed to use unconventional means, social networks, for promotion.

The partnership between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education offers physical activity as a communal component.

***Ecuador:*** reiterates its gratitude for the invitation to the event and expresses the relevance of these contributions, particularly relevant in a context of implementation in Ecuador of the Organic Law on School Feeding, published in April 2020 and its General Regulations, to be enacted in 2021, which allows the establishment of the Inter-institutional Committee on School Feeding, whose inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination effort will allow the gradual and progressive construction of a National Comprehensive School Feeding System, with a holistic approach to healthy lifestyles and the implementation of a nutritional surveillance system, including physical activity.

***El Salvador:*** The focus in the food and school health program in El Salvador is healthy eating and the theme of physical activity is incorporated. El Salvador also works on the issue of school/family gardens in which the child learns about the properties of food to generate healthy habits. The initiative “Compras para la agricultura familiar” promotes shopping from local producers and healthier menus.

In terms of training, virtual diplomas in which the teacher is being strengthened and trained to implement these strategies - of school gardens and nutrition - have been held. In addition, during nutrition week, where schools do various activities focused on healthy eating, teachers are provided with guidelines.

El Salvador currently has partnerships with institutions such as FAO and has a regulation of school shops and cafeterias. The country has also been working on school gardens, ownership of the food that is harvested, and how to appreciate it better. There is also the option to support local food and production. [(See attached Guide to Healthy School Shops and Cafeterias, El Salvador)](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1osagHdeUCQDnMBMYZBPIJInVzHvk7H17/view?usp=sharing)

***Guyana*** expressed that they have a national school feeding program. Initially, this program included milk and biscuits and then revised to include a nutritious sandwich with veggies. Good feedback from children consumption and initial reports showed increased attendance and early attendance to school. Guyana also has school hot meal programs.

However, the country has geographical challenges, and it is hard to reach places, so schools have dormitories and provide kids with hot meals. The Ministry of Health does a lot of training every semester break because sometimes it is necessary to retrain due to inaccessible areas. They use the food that is unique to those areas, and anything available to get the best nutritional content/value. Guyana also shared that in the past few years they did a school survey for Grade 5-11. This was a simple questionnaire for them to identify the type of food that students consume at school, beverages, and what students bring to school. This gives a good idea of what is happening in the country because of the lack of some data. Guyana has high obesity rates for adults, but data are lacking for children.

Regarding physical activity, one hour per week is dedicated to practicing physical theory and practice in primary schools and secondary schools. This is not mandatory for all, especially private schools. Guyana stated that during the COVID, teachers are asking kids to do videos at home for them to get graded in Physical Education. Since it is mandatory in primary, and it is working well.

Nevertheless, for secondary schools, a lot of work needs to be put into that. Guyana also expressed that the Adolescent Health Strategy/Unit and support with PAHO is still in progress but wants to complete by end of next year. This strategy aims to implement activities and promote healthy eating for adolescents in schools. They have secondary school Health Clubs and work with the nutritional department. Guyana also has a secondary School Fitness Challenge; and secondary schools work together, in collaboration with Health and Education. Guyana stressed they are trying to work more on prevention from the adolescent health unit standpoint.

***Honduras*** shared that the country has a program that provides basic distribution of rice, beans, fortified flour, oil, and other local products in schools. As a country strategy to promote physical activity, they have the program "Actívate" that consists of doing diverse physical activities in the educational centers that allow the interaction between teachers, students, and parents. The government has issued an official mandate of at least one hour a day to have physical activity permanently, which is associated with the physical education class that should involve three hours per week according to the law.

Honduras is in the stage of height and weight awareness to determine obesity and overweight statistics in students which will help in encouraging healthy lifestyles a little more. There is a sale regulation of food in schools, known as 'school booths’ or ‘casetas escolares' which is regulated by the Ministry of Education and only allows the sale of healthy foods.

Guidelines include manuals containing various menus from the various regions and the use of products from those regions. The State finances 100% school feeding and there is a school feeding law leading to the school feeding plan.

Other initiatives include the promotion of school gardens with pedagogical emphasis with classes developed in the orchards, the development of the government program "las recreovías" which is an annual calendar where schools have a Saturday of each month to develop physical activities with children, the virtual play camp in Honduras held during December and January with volunteers to reinforce the learning prioritized by the COVID-19 pandemic and, leaving no one behind and with as starting point the need of children in some specific topics.

One of the challenges expressed by Honduras is ensuring synergy with all sectors to coordinate the school feeding program for more breadth and success. Finally, Honduras shared the link to the [Food and Nutrition Law](http://www.poderjudicial.gob.hn/CEDIJ/Leyes/Documents/Ley%20de%20Seguridad%20Alimentaria%20y%20Nutricional%20(2,2mb).pdf) and the [Food Guide](http://www.bvs.hn/Honduras/pdf/GUIASALIMENTARIAS.pdf) of the country.

***Jamaica*** stated that they have developed a comprehensive health promotion strategy. Officials from Jamaica expressed that the Ministry of Health and Wellness in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Youth has worked in the campaign “Jamaica Moves in School”. This is a program that seeks to create a vibrant behavioral change model, looking at the components of healthy eating and physical activity to avoid chronic disease. They are working to create opportunities in schools for more movement.

As a policy directive, Jamaica has introduced 3–5-minute breaks to get the children moving and one hour dedicated to movement per week. They also introduced a national “School Move Day”, where a day in April schools do one hour of activities dedicated to movement. Jamaica has also supported this with a physical activity toolkit that provides guidance to school personnel on how these breaks can be instituted and give ideas of how to incorporate breaks. Water day and activity day in schools were also introduced.

The Ministry of Health emphasized that they have been working closely with the Ministry of Education to incorporate school nutrition standards in the policy. The elaboration of these standards is quite advanced and will be presented soon for Cabinet sign-off.

Jamaica has been working with 100 primary and high schools at the initial stage and will then roll out to the next 100 schools. They are trying to grow the school’s capacity and for this, Jamaica Moves in School campaign has “ambassador” students who are equipped with skills, knowledge, and trained so they are the ones talking with their peers. Teachers are also trained and dubbed “Ambassadors.” Additionally, there is a nutritional and physical activity audit: the schools that are chosen for the pilot, are audited. However, COVID-19 has imposed limitations. Recently, a Google Form was created (before it was done physically), to be accessed virtually.

One challenge is how to sustain a school’s motivation to practice healthy lifestyles and get all schools involved. A lot of time is dedicated to those schools in the pilot and how to spread that across all schools. Children see physical activity as sport-oriented and if they are not good at this sport, they do not want to be involved. Jamaica is trying to make it fun and look at what children like to do (e.g., dance) and start with what children want, and then create materials. The children’s interests are the springboard. An additional challenge is how to get the Minister of Education thinking about this topic when there are many competing priorities and how to ensure keeping it going on all levels at the regional, national, and classroom levels. Jamaica wants to develop a health behavior program that includes physical education and healthy eating with a focus on noncommunicable disease prevention.

Another strategy is the NCD Register, where students identified as having chronic conditions get their records checked and are monitored in health facilities. Jamaica stated that it is important to build awareness and keep the conversation going to sustain the interest.

***Nicaragua:*** there is a model of family health and communication that analyzes the deficit or excess in terms of education through the census that is carried out to the children, care from newborn to 14 or 15 years. It is oriented to health personnel in schools. There is a follow-up for malnutrition, and it also follows adolescents in care to avoid NCDs. In the case of education, school snacks are also given in schools.

One of the challenges is to promote healthy eating in the kiosks, but not having control of the kiosks around the school. Other community strategies are being carried out such as the promotion in sports venues in neighborhoods for young people. Labeling is being updated at the Central American level.

The National Education Plan has a strategic theme of education in values, includes sport, and that the center of education is the person. Nicaragua’s curriculum is permeated by transversal axes that contribute to training in values and human rights for human development and it is a priority. Nicaragua is also developing activities that are pleasant for both boys and girls. Additionally, there are technical standards and regulations for physical activity in Nicaragua.

***Panama:*** According to Panama, within the public policies in school feeding, law 35 establishes the school snack which is a glass of milk or cream and biscuits for all children of general basic education. Law 75, 2017 establishes adequate food measures in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. A basic guide, a food list, and 3 types of establishment Kiosks Type A and B, and cafeterias are part of the regulations.

The Ministry of Education has provided the course Let's Think Nutrition (“Pensemos Nutrición”) aimed at teachers of the educational system with new knowledge of nutrition organized in 4 modules, where information on Panamanian Food Guidelines is provided. It awards a score to teachers who complete it.

Other public policies include Law 115 5/12/2019 that regulates the program Studying Without Hunger (“Estudiar Sin Hambre”). This program provides a hot dish according to the dietary guidelines and respects the culture where these children are. This also helps to avoid dropping out of school. Some of the challenges are that the right staff must be hired and agronomists for school gardens. Panama is receiving FAO technical support for the implementation of this program.

Additionally, the school feeding program (along with the Ministry of Health) is in 16 educational regions, and in 14 institutions there is a nutritionist and an agronomist engineer for the development of the program. The distribution of micronutrients and immunization and the food and nutrition education component are being encouraged through joint efforts of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.

***Paraguay:*** expressed that they have dietary guidelines for the healthy population and for children under two years old, which were updated in 2015. The challenge in 2019 was a delay in the food guidelines because of COVID-19. Paraguay also stated that a great challenge to strengthen the promotion of physical activity is to have a regulation that incorporates the physical education teacher as part of the teaching staff within the curriculum.

***Peru*** shared the initiative I Learn Healthy ("Aprendo Saludable") that articulates the participation of different Ministries, and each ministry was involved in a specific way. The Ministry of Health was responsible for training teachers and for carrying out a nutritional assessment of school children. It also had an attention component. Another Ministry provided food in educational institutions.

At the level of physical activity, it was possible to incorporate and increase the area of physical education in schools. Before they had two hours, now it is three hours, and it is expected that five hours per week will be achieved by having one hour a day.

Other initiatives include the promotion of the use of bicycles "Vías Solidarias", the School Feeding Act that has regulations and Food Guidelines, healthy kiosks and snacks, training of education teachers so that they can address the healthy lifestyle and train parents to take this promotion, educational tools aimed at students and teachers, recipe books at the primary and secondary levels, and "nutriapps". Moreover, the incorporation of a financial tool on budget by results.

Another point to underline is hygiene and sanitation in schools so that they can have access to potable water. Technology is another aspect that has been a challenge for Peru, especially for children and young people, since during the pandemic the internet has been used to make the connection of children and young people so that they can continue their studies.

Peru highlighted some challenges such as schools that do not have coverage of all services, such as water, the changes of government, adaptability, and ICTs.

***Saint Vincent and the Grenadines:*** expressed that the Ministry of Education works with the Ministry of Health in a nutrition unit, that provides guidance to the school feeding program. Initially, when the program first started, similar to Guyana, it included milk and biscuits. The program has developed into a lunch program. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health have made changes to the items in the food basket and a 4-week cycle menu is being piloted which was developed with the collaboration of both ministries. Recipes have been developed and cooks have been trained for this menu. The menu was scheduled to be piloted for November 2020.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines expressed they would be doing an assessment of the pilot done with the headteacher, the cooks, and students to find out the effectiveness of this menu in December. Regarding the nutrition unit, they are developing a child nutrition policy; and have been using these documents to provide guidance to the school feeding program. This nutrition policy would hopefully be implemented throughout January 2021.

***Suriname:*** has done research on diabetes and obesity among children, which resulted in a program called “How Do I Stay Healthy?” This program provides information to make healthy eating choices. The Adolescent Health Strategy has been developed, but still needs to be approved by the Ministry of Health. In terms of physical education, it is part of the curriculum in every school and most schools have a PE teacher, who provides classes every day, minimum once per week.

Suriname is also working on a school feeding project. In 2018 it started preparation and established an agreement with Brazil. The Minister of Education requested to start the project in particular areas where the children do not have healthy habits. A challenge shared was that Suriname had elections not long ago, so they have until the new government takes over and see when the project is approved or not. This project would last two years and then a feasibility study will be conducted to make sure that the project can go national. Up to this point, the only thing needed is finance and a yes from the minister to go for implementation of the project.

***Trinidad and Tobago*** recognized the importance of the school program called “Healthy me” which relates to physical activity and healthy eating. They mentioned the experience with the “Health Fair” and the intersectoral collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to show students how to home garden. Trinidad and Tobago also have mental health resources. From the NCD Committee, the country received an IBB loan; and it is focused on primary, secondary, and special education schools to install physical activity equipment. They have assessed schools with committees on what they will do according to government standards, and in early 2021 this equipment should be in primary and secondary schools. Trinidad and Tobago is now working on special education schools, and it is still at the evaluation stage. They are working with PAHO closely, CARPHA, and the Ministry of Education.

Moreover, standards of nutrition are being worked on, and there are different regional standards to work with. They are also working on the school feeding program to adopt and adapt most of the things they agree on, so any school in the school feeding program is geared towards healthy eating. Another strategy from Trinidad and Tobago is the "Prohibition of sale of sweetened beverages at schools" and the healthy lifestyle quiz.

Trinidad and Tobago also expressed they appreciated what Jamaica said about letting the children tell us what they want to do and that they should try a similar approach. In Trinidad and Tobago, the old-time games (e.g., hopscotch, skipping rope) have been used since they do not require a lot of talent or equipment and children have been enjoying it.

***Uruguay:*** expressed that some of the public policy developments include Law 19140: 2014, with restrictions on unhealthy products and a list of foods recommended in educational centers. Since packaging is a form of advertising; the non-recommended ones are not sold in the study centers. Foods not included are restricted for marketing and sale.

Uruguay has also developed a front labeling policy for identifying products with an excess of nutrients related to overweight, obesity, and NCDs (sodium, sugars, total fat, and saturated fat). This promotes a healthy diet since encourages the consumption of foods with a more beneficial nutritional profile. An ordinance is being designed for the application of Law 19,140 using the front labeling tool for its application.

A strategy has been developed to promote healthy eating and physical activity practices in educational centers, including the training of the educational community and inclusion of the recommendations of the food guide in the educational curriculum, offering healthy foods, linking students with food cultivation, culinary preparation, establishing active breaks and promoting physical activity. Moreover, the school feeding program in Uruguay is currently under restructuring to respond to the current reality.

**Conclusions**

As a result of dialogue about promoting school environments, healthy eating, and physical activity, the fruitful exchange of experiences, learning, and recommendations from an intersectoral perspective was achieved, adding the voices of specialists from Ministries of Education and Ministries of Health. Within the topics covered these are key findings:

* Confirmation that under the context of COVID-19 existing challenges to promote healthy eating and physical activity have intensified, especially due to school closures. Emphasis was placed on the importance of intersectorality in order to provide a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, ensuring inclusiveness and equity, especially for vulnerable populations.
* The sustainability of school feeding and healthy life practices, including physical activity, has as a key success factor the intersectoral and inter-institutional articulation, with local territorial intervention approaches and cultural relevance to effectively serve vulnerable populations.
* The problem of the double burden of malnutrition requires a holistic approach, being identified the consumption practices of ultra-processed foods, sedentary lifestyle, and the supply of ultra-processed foods outside of educational establishments, among others, as factors that affect overweight and obesity.
* Given that the event and its respective report have an approach from the education and health sectors, there are factors not addressed from other sectors but that are important to take into consideration, such as (i) low incomes that induce the consumption of low-priced ultra-processed foods with high calorie and fat, as well as a deficiency in animal protein and micronutrients; (ii) the seasonal and/or deficit food supply of fruits and vegetables for the domestic market, due to the existence of informal domestic production chains, weakness of family agriculture and priority to productive chains for the export of fruits and foreign exchange generation (banana) or products with added value (cocoa and coffee); and, (iii) strengthening of institutional capacities for the effective implementation of surveillance, monitoring and control systems as well as the systematic preparation of evaluation studies.

In addition, the process of sharing experiences allowed the beginning of knowledge co-creation intending to improve school environments and promote healthy eating habits and physical activity in students to avoid obesity, overweight, and undernutrition.

**Next Steps**

As part of the ministerial process, the CIE technical secretariat has supported Member States in the systematization of the lessons learned, and actions and programs implemented to guarantee intersectoral collaboration between health and education, especially under the COVID-19 framework.

As a result of this meeting on the issue of healthy eating and physical activity in schools, the value of this type of exchange was recognized. Therefore, with the support of the CIE technical secretariat and PAHO NCDs Department, other events and initiatives will be held during 2021, as well as the systematization and exchange of documentation in order to facilitate the strengthening of public policies in the region.

**Participants per Working Group**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group** | **Participants** | **Countries / Partners** |
| **1** | Anselm Hennis (PAHO),  Andrea Airall (ATG),  Iris-Mae Gumbs (ANU),  Sean Samuel (ATG),  Dinte Conway (GUY),  Cilandell Glen (GU),  Julia Manderson Steele (JAM),  Tricia Esdaille (SKN),  Sharmila Goerdin-\_\_\_ (SUR-MOESC),  Gwendolyn Sno-Mooikoedoe (SUR-MOESC),  Vickilyn Millington (SVG),  Cher Lamsberg (SUR-MOESC),  La Donna Gulston (TT)  Chandler Hyacinth (Mrs.)  Ms. Pamela Guiste  Weeferly Jules  Norman Gilbert  Ms. Abigail Caleb  Mrs. Julia Manderson Steele  Ms. Michelle Ash  Mr. William Hodge  Ms. Michelle Sutton  CARPHA: Dr. Christine Bocage, Caribbean Public Health Agency (Speaker) | Antigua and Barbuda  Dominica  Grenada  Guyana  Jamaica  Trinidad and Tobago  Saint Kitts and Nevis  Saint Vincent and the Grenadines  Suriname |
| **2** | Mg. Patricia Salti  Mariano Barberena  María Graciela Abriata  Mr. Matías Portela (Speaker)  Sra. Sandra Moscatelli  José Leonardo Sánchez Hernández (Speaker)  Cecilia Gamboa Cerdas  Adriana Bolaños Cruz  Margarita Claramunt Garro  Laura Raquel Pizzarro Viales  Miriam Fernandez  Dr Jose Eduardo Carvajal Obando  José Sandoval  Gabriela Villacres  Pamela Muñoz  Susan Velasco  Lcda. Isis Irazema Canel Palma de Donis  Lcda. Karen Zulim Valenzuela Sierra  Lcda. Luisa Regina Sosa Padilla  Lic. Hari Samuell Tejeda Noriega  Liliana Ventura  Licda. Vianka Barrera  Licda. Raiza Domínguez  Mgtra. Celestina Delgado  Lic. Yeny Carrasco  Lic. Juan Carlos Núñez  Karla Beato  Lic. Gonzalo Baroni  Dra. Alicia M. Fernandez  Dra. Maria José Rodríguez  Lic. Ximena Moratorio | Argentina  Chile  Colombia  Costa Rica  Dominican Republic  Ecuador  Guatemala  Panama  Peru  Uruguay |
| **3** | Ignacio Balard (Focal Point)  Ana Cáceres  Anabella Valle Ruidiaz  Danit Torres Fuentes (Speaker)  Nestor Suarez Bernal (Focal Point)  Rodrigo Nieto  Luisa Jamaica  Juan Camilo Caro  Claudia Roberto  Ana Maria Sierra  Adriana Gómez  Diana Bastidas  Yania Mazón González  Lic. Alina Perez  Dr. Duniesky Cintra  Ana Maria Vigil Cativo  Claudia Raquel Valle de Hernández  Lic. Juan Carlos Contreras  MSc. Lesby Vargas  Dra. Aida Reyes  Lic. Claribel Vega López  Lic. Carolina Marín Ruiz  María Auxiliadora Gadea  Sra. Killy Moleda  Karolina Vera  Oscar Badillo Espinoza  Carlos Zegarra Presser  Sandra Soria  Socorro Saldaña Cardenas  Beatriz Quispe Quille  Gisele Bortolini  Gaia Claumann  Denise Ribeiro Bueno  Dra. Karine Dos Santos (Speaker)  Maria Clara de Paula Tusco | Argentina  Brazil  Colombia  Cuba  El Salvador  Honduras  Nicaragua  Paraguay  Peru |
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A collage of a person

Description automatically generated with low confidence

# PROMOTING SKILLS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE THROUGH PHYSICAL AND NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

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| **Event:** Intersectoral Dialogue on **“**Promoting Healthy Life Skills through Physical and Nutrition Education in Schools” | **Date:** June 30, 2021 |
| **Objective:** Share some of the public policies, programs, and recommendations for the promotion of healthy life skills and physical and nutrition education among representatives from the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education. | |
| **Participant Countries:** Antigua and Barbuda-Argentina- Belize-Bolivia-Brazil-Chile-Colombia-Costa Rica-Cuba[[1]](#footnote-2)-Dominican Republic-El Salvador-Honduras-Jamaica-Mexico-Monserrat-Nicaragua-Panama-Peru-Saint Kitts and Nevis-Saint Lucia-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines-The Bahamas-Trinidad and Tobago-Uruguay | |
| **Panel: Exploring National Initiatives for Promoting Healthy Life Skills through Physical and Nutrition Education in Schools**   * Chile: National School Plan for Physical Activity – Sandra Moscatelli Arena, Coordinator of Artistic Education and Physical Activity in Schools, Ministry of Education * Mexico: National Strategy on Quality Physical Education – Oscar Roman Peña López, Deputy Director of Health, Physical Culture and Sport, Public Education Secretariat * Peru: Promotion of healthy life skills through food and nutrition education – Sandra Allison Soria Mendoza, Directorate-General for Normal Basic Education, Ministry of Education and Néstor Rejas Tataje, Specialist in Health Promotion and National Coordinator of School Health and Physical Activity, Ministry of Health * Saint Kitts and Nevis: Nutrition and physical education as part of the school curriculum –Michelle Sutton, Health and Wellness Coordinator, Curriculum Development Unit, Ministry of Education | |
| **Organized by:** Pan American Health Organization- Department of Non-communicable Diseases (PAHO-NCDS) and -Organization of American States-Department of Human Development, Education and Employment -InterAmerican Committee on Education (OAS / CIE) | |

The intersectoral dialogue between officials from Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education on the topic: **“Promoting Healthy Life Skills through Physical and Nutrition Education in Schools”** was held on June 30th, 2021, led in a collaborative effort by the Department of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NCDS) of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment of the Organization of American States (OAS) as the Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) under the framework of project #4 on the CIE Work Plan 2019-2022. The dialogue was attended by high-level officials designated by their Ministries of Education and Health from 24 participating countries. The event took place simultaneously in English and Spanish and lasted approximately three hours. This intersectoral event was the continuity of discussions among Member States after the first intersectoral dialogue held in November 2020.

The purpose of this event was to share insights and initiatives on how to promote new visions for healthy life skills through physical activity and nutrition education in schools in a post-pandemic world. It also aimed to contribute to the policies, research, capacities, practices, and infrastructure necessary to make those visions a reality. This space for public policies and programmatic exchanges on the subject offered a starting point to know and expand the possibilities for strengthening future policies for school environments.

The activity began with welcoming remarks by Jovan Reid, First Secretary of the Embassy of Barbados to the United States and delegate of the Permanent Mission of Barbados to the OAS, and Jesus Schucry Giacoman Zapata, Director of the Department of Human Development, Education and Employment (DHDEE) of the OAS. Next, the conversation was framed by the participation of Leo Nederveen, Advisor for Food, Nutrition and Physical Activity in Schools of PAHO who presented a snapshot of the regional situation of school environments for healthy eating and physical activity, and Juana Willumsen, Technical Physical Activity Officer from the Department of Health Promotion at the World Health Organization (WHO) who shared a toolkit on promoting physical activity through schools.

The dialogue included a panel discussion where initiatives implemented by some Member States sparked the discussion on key topics such as physical activity programs and strategies, nutrition education, and school curriculum. The event also included three working groups, where participants discussed key elements on public policies, actions taken under COVID-19 for overcoming challenges, and recommendations for improving school environments for healthy life skills through physical and nutrition education as well as strengthening intersectoral collaboration between health and education.

This document compiles and summarizes the contributions and exchange of ideas generated during the dialogue. In this document, the knowledge shared at this event was structured into four sections: panel, breakout discussions, conclusions, and next steps. It should be noted that the contributions made during the panel and breakout discussions are presented in alphabetical order.

**Panel: Exploring National Initiatives for Promoting Healthy Life Skills through Physical and Nutrition Education in Schools**

* **Chile:** National School Plan for Physical Activity– Sandra Moscatelli Arena, Coordinator of Artistic Education and Physical Activity in Schools, Ministry of Education

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| **Highlighted contributions:** Recreational sports workshops, delivery of educational materials, budget available for the implementation of the plan, flexibility of the curriculum, continuity of the program during school closures, the difficulty of hiring experts in the area, intersectoral collaboration. |

Chile began its participation highlighting that as a country composed of 17 regions how the programs are adapted locally based on the national curriculum is the responsibility of each region. In this sense, the Ministry of Education promotes at a national level the exchange of physical activity practices and underscores the importance of preventive measures and approaches on obesity as a mechanism to encourage the general population to embrace healthier lifestyles.

Chile expressed that the purpose of the National School Plan for Physical Activity is to strengthen physical activity in the educational system by understanding the benefits it brings to the lives of students. Three are the main components:

* The introduction of recreational sports workshops throughout the school trajectory, i.e., from early childhood to high school.
* Delivery of educational resources, providing all the necessary pedagogical materials and workshops to be able to carry out the teaching of physical education.
* To set up appropriate physical spaces/ facilities to efficiently deliver physical education classes.

This plan is supported by a national law that frames the Program ''Elige vivir sano'' (Choose to live healthily) that aims to promote healthy habits and lifestyles to prevent the risk of diseases and encourages collaboration among different ministries. For instance, the National School Plan for Physical Activity directly reports what happens in schools to the ''Elige vivir sano'' (Choose to live healthily). During the implementation phase of this Plan, workshops and teacher training competitions were held to facilitate the introduction of recreational sports workshops to promote sports and the development of attitudes and values in public institutions. This was an opportunity to diversify and use the experience of physical activities in schools.

Physical education classes were scheduled with 4 hours available for these lessons, although there is a reduction of hours at the secondary level. This has led to the implementation of extracurricular sports activities named ''free availability hours'', which also gives the advantage that students can express their ideas, demonstrate skills to be developed, and actively participate in physical education activities.

Chile emphasized that these strategies support the teacher in identifying the benefits that physical education brings to students as part of their development and the common good. In addition, educational institutions would have the opportunity to add to the classes the sports and ideas they choose and that are within the Chilean curriculum framework to innovate within physical education, which aims to include every student regardless of their physical condition. Another aspect Chile referred to is that each sports workshop must be taught by professional teachers who are experts in physical education, which makes it a challenge to find qualified people to hire.

In terms of the positive consequences, even during the pandemic, students were willing to participate in sports competitions. Teachers that were not yet trained were able to improve their skills to be hired and perform their work efficiently. Specialized tests were conducted related to physical education, and a significant budget was obtained for this program. Nevertheless, the challenge is still to keep providing coverage to the students to continue with this project from their homes.

* **Mexico:** National Strategy on Quality Physical Education *– Oscar Roman Peña López,* Deputy Director of Health, Physical Culture and Sport, Public Education Secretariat

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| **Highlighted contributions:** Curricular Approach, didactic strategies, systemic approach to physical education, students' motivation, teacher training, the value of physical education, infrastructure, intersectoral collaboration, attention to diversity. |

Mexico started by emphasizing the importance of recognizing that the document prepared by UNESCO in 2015 is strong regarding the envisioned role of physical education, not only in health, but also in coexistence, human relations, and the development of motor skills for all children. Additionally, physical education plays an important role in developing students' abilities to adapt.

Regarding the Mexican context, it was highlighted that the Secretariat of Public Education structure contemplates Federal and State levels and includes kindergarten, primary and secondary education with around 24.5 million students. This makes it necessary to provide solutions and establish public policies and initiatives that respond to the wide diversity of the country. In this sense, the policies designed are national in scope but at the same time have the capacity to be focused locally for each State and region where there is a different demand.

Mexico has put into action “Proyecto De Educación Física De Calidad” (Quality Physical Education Project) which is based on three fundamental pillars: protection and safeguarding of children, inclusion, and physical literacy. This project was established by the National Coordination and a working group that included the National Institute of Public Health, governmental agencies, and representatives of civil organizations, universities, and academic institutions with expertise in different areas related to physical education. The National Institute of Health, although not closely linked to education, was able to have a significant impact, since it was the instance responsible for scheduling meetings with representatives of civil organizations that were related to education in general and physical education, in addition to conducting school visits and interviews. As a result, a status report on Physical Education and a series of guidelines were defined on the following topics:

* Teacher training, recruitment, and development.
* Curricular adaptability
* Infrastructure, resources, and materials
* Community alliances
* Monitoring and quality assurance

The results were published in the document “Hacia una Estrategia Nacional para la prestación de una educación Física de calidad en el nivel básico” (Towards a National Strategy for the provision of quality Physical education at the basic level). In this regard, it was specified that the area in which the most progress has been made has to do with the national curriculum since an approach with a systemic and comprehensive the students at the center of the process. It includes components such as the development of motor skills, integration of corporeality, and creativity in motor action. The curriculum was designed to promote the learning of capacities, abilities, and motor skills and it includes orientations that promote diverse didactic strategies to achieve learning outcomes.

It is intended that students in schools develop a sense of enjoyment for physical activity practices and a knowledge that allows them to be physically active throughout their lives. Another aspect is that the “Aprende en casa” (Learn at Home) strategy seeks to involve families in physical activities by promoting social interaction.

The curriculum has the flexibility to allow teachers to modify the activities according to the characteristics of their local context and students. The curricular approach at the national level seeks that children and teenagers can face problems and challenges they encounter in their lives and that they can solve them strategically as well as being able to self-regulate their emotions and, therefore, foster the adoption of healthy lifestyles. Some of the challenges Mexico highlighted in their process to achieve quality physical education are:

* Schedule allocation. Currently, one hour per week is taught in preschool and elementary school and 2 hours per week in high school.
* Conditions for the development of the lesson. Infrastructure, equipment, and material resources.
* Specialized teachers’ coverage. Approximately only 40% of schools have a physical educator, mainly in urban and densely populated areas.
* Transformation of practices. Achieving physical education for all. Initial and continuous teacher training.
* Re-valorization of physical education. Perspectives of educational changemakers.

Finally, Mexico stated that physical education requires strengthening this systemic perspective to be able to cover the responsibilities assigned to it and to provide quality education. Mexico also shares the following reference documents: [Towards a National Strategy for the Provision of Quality Physical Education at the Basic Level of the Mexican Educational System](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kfKfAXZKemOMWmIDfNJxccn_-Lc3yEDW/view?usp=sharing) and [Key learnings for comprehensive education. Physical education. Basic education. Study plan and programs, didactic guidelines, and evaluation suggestions](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WQUrV0rlT9rTtuLA9SR4Aqp93_pgjvMz/view?usp=sharing).

* **Peru:** Promotion of healthy life skills through food and nutrition education – Sandra Allison Soria Mendoza, Directorate-General for Regular Basic Education, Ministry of Education and Néstor Rejas Tataje, Specialist in Health Promotion and National Coordinator of School Health and Physical Activity, Ministry of Health

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| **Highlighted contributions:** public policies, National Multisectoral Health Policy, National Curriculum for Basic Education, teaching lunch box preparation, articulation of the educational community, timetable, physical activity programs promoting activity for 10 minutes per day, technical assistance, and ongoing monitoring of policy implementation in the different regions, intersectoral collaboration |

Peru has established educational policies on healthy eating and physical activity such as the Law No. 30021 Law for the Promotion of Healthy Eating for children and adolescents, Supreme Decree. No. 003-2017-MINEDU that approves the National Sports Policy, Supreme Decree N° 026-2020-SA that approves the National Multisectoral Health Policy by 2030, among others. Regarding Law 30021 it establishes 6 basic aspects:

* Promotion of nutrition education.
* Observatory on Nutrition and studies of overweight and obesity.
* Environments and promotion of healthy eating.
* Promotion of sports and physical activity.
* Regulation of food and non-alcoholic beverage advertising.
* Advertising warnings applicable to food and non-alcoholic beverages that exceed the established technical parameters.

The educational sector promotes the development of competencies in primary education students to achieve an active and healthy life through the implementation of the National Curriculum of Basic Education. Competencies, capacities, and transversal approaches are established and translated into specific actions that constitute values ​​and attitudes linked to the adoption of healthy and sustainable lifestyles. This is shown, for example, when people do not consume foods that present the octagonal warnings on their packaging. This work must be articulated within the entire educational community. At school, healthy eating and healthy lunch boxes are promoted, as well as the sponsorship of kiosks, canteens, and school cafeterias; households are also encouraged to collaborate. Regarding the promotion of physical activity and sport at schools, three hours per week are dedicated to the subject of Physical Education. Likewise, national school sports games are promoted and are held annually to promote sports in schools; a large part of the student population participates in these competitions.

The health sector aims to improve the habits, behaviors, and lifestyles of the population, acting on the factors that generate vulnerability and risk to the population's health. It underlined the importance and experience of the actions articulated between various sectors led by the Ministry of Education (Minedu) in the multisectoral Commission for education in healthy and sustainable environments, also integrated by the Ministry of Health and 7 other sectors. The implementation of policies and legislation on healthy eating, educational quality, and the environment is promoted. For instance, the National Environmental Education Policy that was approved in 2012, which is implemented through the National Environmental Education Plan, establishes the importance of creating environments in which healthy and sustainable eating is promoted.

The impact of unhealthy eating on the population can currently be seen in the increase in overweight and obesity cases, in addition to the environmental impact due to the degradation of ecosystems. Additionally, under the pandemic, the program "Aprende en casa" (Learn at home) is focused on the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity for 10 minutes a day. The country has also designated a budget for the construction of bicycle lanes for transportation from and to the school and "La ruta activa" (the Active Path) which is a ludic material for children to play with their families at home. Peru has also provided technical assistance and permanent monitoring of the application of the policies in the different regions.

While closing, they highlighted two national policies that are in the process of being updated: the National Policy on Sports and Physical Activity; and the National Policy for Environmental Education. This regulatory framework will allow the country to continue working in a multisectoral approach and at the national level, in the promotion of a healthy and sustainable diet as well as in the practice of physical activity and sport for healthy lifestyles.

* **Saint Kitts and Nevis:** Nutrition and physical education as part of the school curriculum –Michelle Sutton, Health and Wellness Coordinator, Curriculum Development Unit, Ministry of Education

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| **Highlighted contributions:** unified and intersectoral collaboration, curricular structure, establishing a sector plan, introducing health and physical literacy as a core competence, responding to student’s needs and the diversity in the country, lack of trained professionals, timetabled sessions throughout the week, balanced assessment, resources that are teacher-student friendly. |

In Saint Kitts and Nevis, from 2009 to 2016 policies mentioned the school curriculum would expand experiences for students in Physical Education and will give a good basis for health and wellness. However, these components were not defined clearly, and therefore, what the policy statements meant could lead to ambiguity. Up to that date, within the education policy statements, Physical Education was promoted in collaboration with schools, the Ministry of Sports, Youth Department, and community clubs in order to ensure that at least two hours a week were spent on high-quality physical education. Moreover, activities were not necessarily guided by the Ministry of Education.

In this sense, most of the developments were governed under the Sport Education Model which included aspects such as coaching sessions in certain sporting disciplines within the sporting season once a week, emphasis on sport literacy/sport-specific, competition focus, and little focus on physical and health literacy development of the student. Saint Kitts and Nevis highlighted that many activities were highly gender-based because it is linked to the sports that are competed at within the interschool perspective. Within that context, this model was not responding to what was indicated in the educational policy statements.

As a consequence of this, Saint Kitts and Nevis conducted a needs assessment involving stakeholders across the country, and the Ministry of Education established in 2017 the new education sector plan “Education for All: Embracing Change, Securing the Future”. This sector plan included a specific policy goal which established that it is essential to improve the quality and relevance of education to ensure that curriculum and assessment support the attainment of desired learning outcomes. This policy goal allowed to revise and update physical activity practices through a revised national curriculum. After this revision, among the seven core competencies which students need to accomplish by the time they complete secondary education, it is contemplated in the curriculum as a core competency that students lead a healthy and active life.

In order to ensure the accomplishment of this core competency, health and wellness were included as a new core subject area. The Health and Wellness subject includes both physical and health literacy components with life skills embedded throughout. The health literacy component incorporates healthy self (self-esteem, self-efficacy, growth and development, healthy habits, and healthy eating), healthy relationships (supporting and helping others, expressing feelings, friendships, and families), and healthy community (values, traditions, media awareness, environments, safety, and risks) whereas the physical literacy component comprises active living (health-related fitness, personal and social responsibility and active for life) and physical competence (movement skills and competence, movement strategies). Although traditional activities are included within physical competence, dance has also been emphasized in the curriculum as a strategy for promoting physical activity and group fitness.

Additionally, this subject is based on international, regional, and national standards and establishes expected learning outcomes throughout both primary and secondary levels. Another highlighted aspect is that this lesson is timetabled throughout the week.

Saint Kitts and Nevis emphasized the lack of trained professionals in the area is one of the biggest challenges the country has faced. Because of this, the language and structure used in the curriculum are also designed for teachers who are not experts in the physical and health education field as well as using resources that are teacher-student friendly.

In addition, the curriculum considers a balanced assessment with grades recorded and students’ performance. In physical competence, grading is based on skills and attitudinal using grade-level competencies and/or student goal setting and personal progress while in the active living component (formative and summative) is done through projects, discussions, self and peer assessment, fitness journals, among others.

Finally, Saint Kitts and Nevis stressed that in order to ensure healthy life skills in schools, initiatives include a clear curriculum and assessment expectations; quality physical education, health, and wellness; specific curriculum outcomes within a core subject area across primary to secondary level and unified collaborations.

**Breakout Groups Discussions: Sharing National Policies, Initiatives and Recommendations for Promoting Healthy Life Skills through Physical and Nutrition Education in Schools**

After the panelist presentations, the next section of the event was intended to present the perspectives from authorities of the Ministries of Health and Education from the participating countries. Officials and specialists engaged in a discussion in three breakout groups. Their experiences and opinions regarding public policies, actions taken for overcoming challenges, and recommendations for strengthening collaboration between health and education, especially in the context of COVID-19 are detailed - in alphabetical order (by country). These contributions were guided by the following questions:

1. What is the differentiating element of life skills-based physical and nutrition education that you would highlight from the implementation of public policies in your country?
2. In the context of COVID, what effective actions have been taken to overcome the challenges?
3. What recommendations would you propose to promote coordinated collaboration between education and health?

Synthesis of highlighted contributions per group:

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| **Highlighted Contributions** | | |
| **Group #1** | | |
| **Public Policies**  -Inclusion of physical activity  -School clubs to promote healthy eating and physical activity | **Actions for Overcoming COVID-19 Challenges**  -Continuation of school nutrition programs by NGOs and using vouchers, Ministry of Agriculture packages.  - Remove all the junk food and beverages from snacks at the schools.  -Talking with industry so they can reduce the level of sugar on the drinks they want to keep giving to the schools. | **Recommendations**  -Collaboration - Education, Health, Agriculture (combine food, nutrition, and physical activity)  -Inclusion of Physical Activity for all grades  -Trained Physical Education teachers in schools |
| **Group #2** | | |
| **Public Policies**  -Universal access to protective factors  -Mandatory nature of the programs.  -Laws, regulations, and resolutions.  -School feeding programs.  -Curriculum incorporating food and nutrition education.  -Curricular reorganization.  -Intersectoral programs. | **Actions for Overcoming COVID-19 Challenges**  -Social-emotional strengthening | **Recommendations**  -Harmonization of the administrative burden.  -Actions at the municipal and community level.  -Citizens with rights.  -Impact and value of physical activity in the return to face-to-face education. |
| **Group #3** | | |
| **Public Policies**  -Communication campaigns to promote healthy eating and physical activity (Physical Activity vs. sport).  -Food and physical activity guidelines (Food and Nutrition Education and Physical Education).  -Regulation including promotion of healthy eating and promotion of physical activity, coherence between components.  -Informative documents  -Focus on rights and quality of life | **Actions for Overcoming COVID-19 Challenges**  -School Feeding Programs at home  -Virtual learning | **Recommendations**  -Resolutions and intersectoral committees (legal framework)  -Focal points of each ministry to improve articulation. |

Experiences of participating countries

**Argentina**: healthy school environments are promoted linked to a program at the ministerial level and attend to the programmatic issues with the Physical Education Centers (CEFs). They also work for the universality of Physical Education in terms of law because they guarantee compulsory physical education at all educational levels in public and subsidized centers. A minimum of two times a week from 3 years old is guaranteed.

The country has two resolutions: one from the Ministry of Health and the other from the Ministry of Education that were jointly developed in 2019. It establishes standards for both nutrition and physical activity, oriented to the prevention of malnutrition. Argentina is now working on those standards, especially to expand them about other issues such as non-communicable diseases, psychosocial and gender factors. In addition, there are two laws approved and in the process of regulation.

Argentina proposed to approach the subject in terms of rights: the right to physical activity, the right to defend that physical activity so that any citizen is able to protect his or her health and can motivate his or her family to engage in physical activity. Also, Argentina highlighted the importance of positioning Latin American citizens in terms of the possibility of having healthy environments and demanding their right to physical activity.

**Belize** expressed that there is not a physical education teacher in every school, so it might depend on the zone. Additionally, the Belizean curriculum tends to have more focus on physical activity however it needs to be demonstrated the snapshot of what a meal is and what it includes.

**Bolivia:** with support from PAHO, Bolivia conducted a school health survey. In nutrition and physical activity, there has been an increase in the consumption of sugary drinks and unhealthy food and a reduction in physical activity. Bolivia also stated that the country has a Healthy Food Law that also includes the issue of marketing and other issues that are being worked on with the Ministry of Education to work on school breakfasts and snacks.

**Brazil:** In healthy eating, it was highlighted the National School Feeding Program, which provides healthy meals to more than 43 million children. The school health program is another action that is carried out in partnership between health and education and includes healthy eating and physical activity. In this program, the municipalities sign up, commit to the goals, receive resources in the first year as an incentive, and receive them in the second year if they meet the goals.

**Chile** expressed that something essential is the universality of access to protective factors, both for physical activity and healthy eating, which seek to generate within educational establishments a system of equity where the baseline satisfies and has a total coverage as some programs that tend to try to reach the levels to have a physically active population. This will help prevent many health problems but will also generate an issue of equity with other educational systems as well as the issue of food that is a social determinant of health.

Chile also stated that the fact that the subject Physical Education and health is present from early education to high school with a compulsory number of hours, means that, as its name indicates, physical education is addressed but also with the associated health component, and this shows the link between the two areas as inseparable, which is present from the formulation of the learning objectives.

Chile has embraced an inclusive concept, which is present in all its curriculum, involving Physical Education; that is why physical activity is spoken of not as an area of talent development, but as an area of access to opportunities for all students.

Chile expressed that a great concern from the Ministry of Health and in consideration of Physical Education, the Ministry of Education, is that it has a cognitive lag due to the lack of face-to-face classes and it is suspected that, leaving the pandemic mitigation, the space for the recovery of Physical Education hours will be very reduced, increasing the hours of other subjects such as Mathematics and Language. Chile also put on the table whether there is a possibility that the OAS or PAHO could generate an evaluation instrument to have a baseline at the level of the Americas to know what position we are having in this phase of recovery from Physical Education. Chile expressed that now health goals will have to be generated for a decade, and this decade will mark the century. In this sense, if this decade does not have a prevalent component of a binomial that is nutrition and physical activity within a school environment, it will be very difficult to recover these generations.

**Colombia:** In the design of healthy eating strategies in the school environment, five elements are recognized: There is a nutritional food transition in school children that has generated changes in consumption patterns and coexistence of malnutrition by deficit, inadequate feeding practices from home, disjointed interventions and changes in regional food patterns that generate a loss of gastronomic identity, food insecurity and limited access to a balanced diet; unhealthy food practices in children and youth in contexts of poverty and vulnerability, as well as rural contexts that condition growth processes, comprehensive development, and permanence in the education system.

In this sense, the actions developed for the promotion of healthy environments in schools include healthy policies, plans, and strategies that guarantee adequate physical environments, adequate infrastructure for learning and physical activity, the school food code, a pedagogical project harmonized with healthy lifestyles strategy and an empowered and mobilizing educational community around wellness and learning. There are also intersectoral alliances that favor the harmonization of policies, plans, projects, and programs, and an instance of social participation. In addition, educational establishments in Colombia have by law institutional autonomy for the design of their curriculums within the framework of their Institutional Educational Projects and under the guidelines established by the Ministry of National Education, that allows programs to be contextualized to the conditions where educational establishments are circumscribed and the priority needs of the populations, including healthy lifestyles, that contribute to the comprehensive training of students.

Colombia also referred to the national policy for children and adolescents 2018-2030 which aims to have comprehensive interventions in this population. The country seeks to articulate intersectorially and focus on rights and quality of life so that children are at the center of actions as rights holders. It was highlighted that social participation is a cross-cutting element. In the health sector, there is a national public health plan to promote health through the promotion of healthy environments that include nutrition and physical activity. There are also coordinated actions in the intersectoral framework, with the Education, Sports, Health and Culture sectors for coordination and superior orientation on the promotion, development, and measurement of physical activity impact. However, intersectoral work can be strengthened with civil society and organizations that promote actions within the education for life framework and towards wellness and healthy lifestyles.

Colombia emphasized that there is no single curriculum and there is curricular autonomy. However, there is a pedagogical plan for the promotion of food culture, with an emphasis on reducing the consumption of critical nutrients. The focus is on the development of competencies that, in the case of physical education curricular development, allow the articulation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions to adequately solve challenges and challenging situations. This approach suggests that, among other aspects, girls, boys, adolescents, and young people acquire competencies in healthy eating and physical activity with the participation of the family (also integrates hygiene practices) and that there is a challenge to continue at home with the food supplement, ensuring capacity building and family integration.

In Colombia, during the pandemic, intersectoral articulation and the participation of national and international experts in working groups have been of great importance for the adequate decision making of the different measures, both in the school environment, home environment, as well as in other community environments. This is how the strategies that have recovered the television and educational radio concepts have been scenarios in which families and students have been able to learn about aspects related to physical education, physical activity, the use of free time, leisure time, and recreation, based on the construction of skills and training for life-oriented from self-care and care for others.

**Costa Rica:** The primary school Physical Education curriculum includes healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and is supported by the Home Education program. The program is contextualized according to the regions. Currently, there is a school kiosks regulation (Reglamento para el funcionamiento y administración del servicio de soda en los centros educativos públicos) that prohibits high fat foods and carbonated soft drinks, etc. supervised by the Ministry of Education. There is also the Costa Rican Network for Physical Activity and Health (RECAFIS) which is a group of state institutions that look after the welfare of the population, in this case, students; for example, they carry out censuses and according to the results intervene in the regions where there is a greater population with obesity.

**Cuba** is characterized by an intersectoral program involving the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Institute of Physical Education and Integration, to develop activities to ensure quality physical education is integrated into the school curriculum from early education to technical and professional education. Additionally, support is received from the Ministry of Culture with art instructors who develop dance circles that develop skills through movement.

Cuba also expressed that there are food guides for infants under 2 years old and over 2 years old and that work is not done in isolation but rather jointly between the different ministries in favor of health and prevention of NCDs from childhood onwards.

**Dominican Republic:** Education and health worked together since 2017 to reduce overweight and obesity and this includes a technical group that works on health and physical activity. Moreover, the nutritional quality of school meals is supervised. In terms of physical activity, there is not much progress, and it needs to be strengthened. Virtual training was used a lot to guide physical activity and healthy eating and work is being done to strengthen the alliance between health and education. However, the country expressed that there was a delay in the progress of the plan due to the pandemic.

**Ecuador:** physical education is part of the curriculum since 2016. There are also several culturally significant practices and the school feeding program for students to be provided with breakfast since 2016. There is also an intersectoral strategy for chronic child malnutrition with the idea of articulating it as a sustainable process over time. Another important strategy in Ecuador is food categorization using color-coding.

**El Salvador:** as part of the successful initiatives, El Salvador mentioned the School Food and Health Program, which includes among its components school food and food education, including the school garden as a pedagogical resource; citizen participation, and school health. There are also regulations to control the marketing of unhealthy foods in both public and private centers.

Furthermore, the school curriculum includes food and nutrition content and the law on healthy and sustainable school food is in the process of being drafted. El Salvador also highlighted the television and radio campaigns targeting students and the work with school gardens and family gardens since the pandemic started and schools were closed. These campaigns also include the issue of food security, stress, and physical activity. There is a healthy and sustainable food strategy in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Agriculture.

The School Food and Health Program of El Salvador develops food and nutrition education and works strongly on the issue of healthy school stores. In the context of COVID, to give continuity to the topics, a virtual diploma course on food and nutrition education for schools was designed and developed for teachers, in which more than 2,000 teachers participated. Support and recreational material were provided to develop food and nutrition education with students.

**Honduras:** Physical education is incorporated into the basic school curriculum and there is also a school meals program implemented in all public and private schools. There are regulations regarding the coverage and supervision of cafeterias in schools.

Honduras stated that another sub-directorate has been developing socio-emotional strengthening programs for children in educational centers, to treat the students from the point of view of the conditions caused by the pandemic to promote a balance between their mental and physical health. These programs are being launched through partnerships with UNICEF and others. In addition, the development of methodologies for the management of emotions and socio-emotional strengthening through physical activity in educational centers has been another area that has been worked on.

Honduras recommended the development of a joint plan between health and education for the implementation of educational, health, and social development policies for healthy eating and physical activity to maintain health, as well as actions to promote protective factors from prevention through joint work with the Ministry of Health and work on a strategic route for the promotion of healthy lifestyles and healthy eating at school and home.

Another aspect highlighted by Honduras was the need to strengthen inter-institutional management for the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity as a lifestyle and that initiatives should come from the communities themselves, based on the organizations existing in them. In Honduras, there are the ONDE, which are the organizations that have to do with educational development at the municipal level and that could be priority entities from which actions are promoted at the community level, not only at the educational center; this to physically activate families and that they become a model of healthy lifestyles for children.

In Honduras, different programs have been developed in this sense, where at the level of some municipality’s groups are established and professionals are hired to generate spaces for physical activity. This is combined with curricular support from educational centers and articulated with mental health strategies that contribute to the maintenance of physical health and the formation of physical and emotional self-care habits including what is their ideal weight and how they should eat, among others.

**Jamaica:** The Ministry of Health has developed in primary and secondary schools a curriculum with a component of food and nutrition. For physical activity, it applies to all levels; however, for some grades, it is an option. Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted through clubs that schools have especially in the afternoon. Moreover, in Jamaica students usually receive education on nutrition and physical activity. In terms of intersectoral collaboration, there is a joint committee between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education so they can develop a school nutrition policy to strengthen good healthy eating among the students; however, it is still being revised.

Jamaica suggested strengthening the collaboration between ministries including Agriculture so the schools can have a better curriculum and strengthen nutrition, wellbeing, and physical activity.

**Mexico:** The differentiating element has to do with the approach; the curriculum was reorganized so that it would no longer appear traditionally by blocks of sports, but rather the curricular perspective was modified to offer all students access to the same opportunities, also thinking of greater participation and inclusion (to eliminate aspects such as men play soccer and women play volleyball or men with balls and women with the rope).

On the subject of generating transferable skills, the proposal that is being promoted does not focus on merely developing motor aspects but on working systemically on motor capacities, abilities, and skills, i.e., not segmenting the learning process (one session of strength, another day balance...) but rather teachers can build didactic units with a series of strategies based on motor games, sports initiation, educational sport, corporal expression, etc. to promote a comprehensive training that goes beyond merely learning a sporting technique and acquire skills for life (for example strategic thinking or self-knowledge).

Hand in hand with this, there are guidelines for regulating the sale of food in schools, Mexico expressed it is necessary to also think about whether it is something that should be sanctioned and how to sanction it. In that sense, the Secretariat of Health works together with the Secretariat of Education; because although guidelines exist, it is something that requires monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation in schools.

There have been efforts to create this synergy between Secretariats, for example, there is a project called “Salud en tu escuela” (Health at your school), where a series of interventions were launched to address the problems of overweight and obesity, ranging from traditional measurements, to be able to make a diagnosis of children who needed to be channeled to health centers to have more personalized attention. Initiatives were generated during recess to keep children physically active, to strengthen the theme of physical education, etc.

In the last few years, there has been a very valuable discussion about generating a strategy for active and healthy schools, in which the Secretaries of Health, Education, and other instances (sports and private enterprise alliances) work collaboratively to generate a joint strategy to address the health problem, but that also recognizes the reality of the schools. However, it is necessary to consider that when there is already a preset curriculum with limited time, adding other initiatives is a major challenge because the teacher must choose between the curriculum, the proposed project, and the administrative burden.

It is important to ensure that projects do not end up as bureaucratic red tape; the administrative burden means that they are not always sustainable. Therefore, an important part of policy design is to harmonize the curricular perspective from the problem to be addressed and the management perspective.

**Montserrat** expressed children were getting access to physical activity even where they were not going to school due to the pandemic. This is done through online classes or activities that are assigned to children as part of the academic calendar.

**Nicaragua:** School kiosks have been regulated to control the consumption of unhealthy food and Physical Education has been given the role to generate all the benefits it is known to produce such as cognitive, learning, disease prevention, among others.

**Panama** expressed that the implementation of physical education is necessary to combat obesity and sedentary lifestyles. The country has worked on the update and improvement of the school curriculum by adding new dietary guidelines that also include the importance of physical activity. However, the curriculum should be improved by increasing physical activity. Panama also has Law No. 75 that includes food offerings in kiosks and cafeterias and the program “Estudiar Sin Hambre” (Study without Hanger) with food and nutrition education components.

**Peru** stated that the progress shown is the result of sectoral and multisectoral efforts based on a comprehensive work that has allowed, among others, strengthening the skills of teachers and school principals to promote and implement actions related to the promotion of active and healthy life in the classroom and at school. Peru highlighted that since 2013 a commission was formed initially by the Ministries of Development and Social Inclusion, Health and Education, who through their focal points have been the drivers of efficient articulated work that can show concrete achievements. In 2019, the commission was expanded, integrating a total of nine sectors, including the Ministry of Education, Health, Development, and Social Inclusion, Agriculture and Irrigation, Production, Culture, Housing, Construction and Sanitation, Women and Vulnerable Populations, and Environment, to optimize the learning achievements of students in public educational institutions of Regular and Special Basic Education, to generate opportunities for the development of their skills and capacities, which allow fully exercising their civil rights, for example, the right to healthy and sustainable environments.

**Saint Kitts and Nevis** shared that the collaboration between health and physical activity is apart from the curriculum. However, it will be valuable if they can implement these items and create a more solid collaboration.

**Saint Lucia** stated that physical activity usually happens on schedule and that very few of their teachers in the schools have a very basic level of knowledge in physical education. Another issue is the structure of the schools because due to the weather and concrete, it is hard to implement physical activities. Saint Lucia does not have any physical education at the secondary level. Physical education should be seen as the main component, and it is something they would like to highlight and make a primary component. Saint Lucia also shared that physical education continued online during the lockdown and school closures and expressed those teachers who have a degree in Physical Education should be placed at the primary schools since now they are placed at secondary schools.

**The Bahamas** said that one of the challenges that the country faces in terms of the sports base is because the country does not teach the nutritional aspect; however, they are trying to update the curriculum to be implemented. The time allocated is only 40 minutes every other week. The Bahamas also stated that they are more focused on academic studies so for that reason the country is trying to add other items.

When the pandemic started, The Bahamas strengthened the program, particularly with farmers. They removed all the junk food and beverages from snacks at the schools. In fact, they are talking with the industry so they can reduce the level of sugar on the drinks they want to keep giving to the schools. The Bahamas also provided food vouchers to the students so they could get access to the meals. At some point, they gave those vouchers to the parents since children were not allowed to go to school.

The Bahamas expressed it is necessary to promote a healthy life and physical education from grades 7 to 12 since not everyone is taking this as a subject. For that reason, it would be ideal to make it primarily for everybody. Another component is family life which is mainly sexual education but not on the side of the wellness and health component. For that reason, The Bahamas suggested seeing more of that to be implemented. Another recommendation was the collaboration between ministries of health with education so they can combine the nutrition (food and nutrition) aspect with the physical education to achieve this goal and that it could be applied to junior students.

**Trinidad and Tobago:** In terms of COVID, Trinidad and Tobago had a lot of NGOs that were trying to help with getting access to food. For example, they provided food cards through the Ministry of Finance and Education. It also included a salary relief plan for teachers. Additionally, the Ministry of Agriculture provided packages of fresh products that were delivered to students through educational centers. The country also provided equipment to the schools to promote physical activity.

**Uruguay:** The law 2013 19140 regulates foods in educational centers and there is a commission to monitor the provisions of this law and carry out actions to promote healthy eating. Another significant initiative is the document "7 prácticas" (Seven Practices) which is related to nutrition and physical activity (theoretical and practical) for the entire educational community including primary school, secondary school, technical secondary school, and teacher training places. It is necessary to have an integral look at physical activity and healthy eating and not to be worked as hard content but to work in the environment so that it becomes normal. Uruguay also highlighted that it is important that the different components in the school are in harmony.

**Conclusions**

As a result of the dialogue about promoting healthy life skills through physical and nutrition education in schools, there was a fruitful exchange of experiences and opinions on public policies, actions taken to overcome challenges, and recommendations to strengthen collaboration from an intersectoral perspective, adding the voices of specialists from the Ministries of Education and the Ministries of Health of the region. Among the topics discussed, the following stand out as the main findings:

Within the topics covered these are some of the key findings:

* A confirmation that under the context of COVID-19 existing challenges to promote healthy lifestyles have intensified, especially due to school closures.
* The emphasis was placed on the importance of intersectorality to provide a comprehensive and sustainable approach to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, ensuring inclusiveness and equity for all, and the importance of public policies, legal frameworks, regulations, and guidelines which are integral and multidimensional.
* In addition, the process of sharing experiences allowed the beginning of knowledge co-creation intending to improve healthy lifestyles in schools to avoid obesity, overweight, and undernutrition through physical and nutrition education.

**Next Steps**

As part of the ministerial process, the CIE Technical Secretariat has supported Member States in the systematization of the public policy initiatives, actions, and programs implemented as well as recommendations to guarantee intersectoral collaboration between health and education, especially under the COVID-19 framework.

As a result of this intersectoral dialogue on the issue of healthy lifestyles through physical and nutrition education in schools, the value of this type of exchange was recognized. Therefore, with the support of the CIE technical secretariat and PAHO NCDS Department, other events and initiatives will be carried out during 2021 as well as the systematization and exchange of documentation to facilitate the strengthening of public policies in the region.

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| --- | --- | --- |
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# POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR IMPLEMENTING APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS TO NUTRITION AT SCHOOLS

In process of validation by the countries\*.

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1. Officials from Cuba and Montserrat were confirmed by OPS. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)