**Side Event - GDS 2022**

**“Building an education for all: learnings from disability-inclusive experiences”**

**17 February - 1pm CET**

**Hosting organizations:**

* **Global Campaign for Education** (GCE), a civil society movement that promotes and defends education as a basic human right. It campaigns and advocates at the international, regional and national level to put pressure on governments and the international community to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality, public education.
* **Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education** (CLADE), a plural network of civil society organizations, present in 18 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It promotes social mobilization and advocacy actions in defense of the human right to transformative, public, secular and free education for all, throughout life and as a State’s responsibility.
* **Regional Network for Inclusive Education** (RREI Latin America), a coalition of organizations of persons with disabilities, families and human rights from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, which works for the right of all learners –to receive inclusive education in a school for all.

**Objective:**

 **For education to be able to contribute to the fulfilment of the principle of not leaving anyone behind, education institutions must be inclusive.** This means that everyone should have access to, and be included in the general education system, regardless of disability, social, economic and/or ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, among other factors. **Inclusive education acknowledges that every person has unique characteristics and interests, and that everyone can learn if education institutions generate the conditions to make that happen.** The notion of inclusion in education has political implications that also question the belief that education is reserved for school-age children only, without considering that everybody has the right to life-long educational opportunities, irrespective of the context or circumstance in which they find themselves.

**Under this paradigm, 15 years ago the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was approved, stating in its article 24 that States have the obligation to guarantee inclusive education systems at all levels and prevent persons with disabilities from being excluded from general education**. The convention also introduces the notions of support and reasonable accommodation as legal clauses to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. In the context of education, these clauses mean that education systems should be adjusted to the learning needs of children, youth and adults, regardless of their disability (physical, sensory, psychosocial, or intellectual). They entail several aspects related not only to securing access to school facilities, teaching materials, and textbooks, but also to designing teaching and assessment strategies adapted to their needs and interests. Additionally, in 2016, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, concerned about the persistence of profound challenges regarding the fulfillment of the right to education of this group, adopted General Comment No. 4 to specify its scope and characteristics. Complementary, other series of general recommendations emerged, reaffirming and supplementing the framework of international standards to be applied in the subject.

**However, systemic reforms that are needed to ensure truly inclusive education systems, capable of welcoming and valuing all people, continue to be an outstanding debt in most countries of the world.** As a consequence, many children and youth with disabilities still remain at home or in different kinds of institutions instead of receiving education, others are sent to special schools, and among those who manage to enter regular schools, very few receive the support they need to learn, participate and progress on an equal basis with others. These three situations constitute a violation of their right to education, and by doing so they also impact on their right to work, to have an adequate standard of living, to participate in public and political life, to live independently and within the community, among others.

But beyond this context, **there are also multiple local and national experiences that show that transformation of education systems and school cultures to effectively advance on the path of inclusion is possible**, and -what is more- positive for students with and without disabilities, for teachers and families, and for society in general, as inclusion in education works as a driver for fairer communities. In short, **experiences that demonstrate that inclusive education is the key to breaking an unjust *status quo* and building plural societies that value human diversity.**

For all these reasons, **the event's main objective is to present some of these experiences to generate a constructive dialogue that allows to recover and put in value certain elements capable of illuminating and guiding the processes of change needed at the national level, and also to think of ways to address the challenges that are being faced**. In addition to this, **the dissemination of these experiences serves to break down barriers and misconceptions that usually work as obstacles for advancing inclusive education, mainly, the myth that inclusive education is an utopia or that it is only achievable in high income countries**.

**Speakers and selected experiences:**

The selected speakers and experiences come from **different regions of the world and consider reforms related both to public policies and school practices,** as well as the interactions between these two fields.

* **Gordon Porter, Director of Inclusive Education Canada:** He will describe the transition to an inclusive education system that took place in many jurisdictions in Canada in the last 35 years. The discussion will include considerations on the legal and human rights context that have led to the educational innovations in delivering instruction to children facing learning challenges and how a program rooted in disability can be turned into a set of practices and supports that allow schools to accommodate other students with diverse needs. The importance of system restructuring and changing roles, as well as the ways for promoting collaboration and problem solving including effective partnerships with parents will be discussed.
* **Traore Tahirou, National Coordinator of the National Coalition for Education for All of Burkina Faso:** Hewill present the experience of the participation of the coalition in the implementation of the Regional Advocacy Project for the development of inclusive education policies in West Africa, a project that seeks to contribute to inclusive quality education in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. He will focus his presentation specifically on the use of information and communication technologies for inclusion of children with disabilities in Burkina Faso.
* **Claudia Werneck, journalist, writer, activist and founder of “Escola de Gente”:** She will speak about the experience of "Escola de Gente - Comunicação em Inclusão", a non-governmental organization founded in Brazil in 2002 with the aim of putting communication at the service of inclusion in society, especially of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Among its actions are advocacy in public policies, participation in rights councils, qualification processes in the production of cultural and media content and training of multipliers, always with a focus on the right to accessible communication. Since its foundation, the organization has been recognized with more than 60 national and international awards, and some of Escola de Gente's innovations were included in the list of the "400 best practices in the world" by the UN, towards the 2030 Agenda.
* **Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, National Coordinator of the Vietnam Association for Education For All:** She will present the coalition's work, a network of 50 local non-governmental organizations, schools, colleges, research institutes and grassroots organizations, which has had a major influence on Vietnam's policies and practices for ensure inclusive education, focusing on persons with disabilities.