

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN NICARAGUA

Nicaragua celebrates educational achievement for children with special needs through its integrated approach with children, schools and families.

Nicaragua's Ministry of Education has implemented an integrated strategy to improve education for children with special needs. Continued specialisation of teachers, adapted educational materials, improved school environments and permanent family support providing skills and learning development for their children, all combine to create successful learning outcomes for children with special needs.

1,489 special needs teachers and pedagogical advisers, including specialisation in "sensorial integration", have already been trained to develop inclusive classrooms. Teachers have the opportunity to achieve formal qualifications including a diploma in the care of minors with disabilities in early childhood and a Masters in Disability Care. A course on visual impairment care emphasises orientation and mobility, numeracy, and reading and writing in Braille.

With the participation of 400 special education teachers in inclusive classes, MINED has also introduced courses specialising in educational technologies aimed at creating content and software adapted for students with disabilities. A virtual course on the detection of hearing impairments has been developed with the participation of 500 teachers. Further teacher training to assist students with language difficulties is due to begin in March. In addition, 850 teachers are being trained in Nicaraguan sign language and interpretation.

The provision of educational material and equipment in Special Education Schools is now guaranteed. As part of MINED's strategy, interactive digital textbooks have been developed for use by students with disabilities, with technical cooperation from UNICEF. Schools in Estelí, León, Managua, Chinandega, Juigalpa, Rivas and Carazo have been equipped with sensory stimulation rooms, where therapies are carried out in conjunction with families to stimulate student skills. The installation of wireless internet and updated educational software complements learning in different subjects.

A further initiative is the establishment of music, singing, dance, painting, cookery and handicraft workshops to promote skills, creativity and entrepreneurship in students with disabilities.

100% of students with disabilities have received school packages and all teachers have resource cases containing materials for the development of educational activities in the classroom. Perkins

machines, rulers and braille writing punches have been delivered to students with visual impairment.

From March, special education tele-classes will be broadcast on Channel 15 and on MINED platforms to reinforce learning, with translations in sign language for students with hearing impairment. Parents and carers of children with special needs have attended workshops to learn techniques they can use at home to provide stimulation for their children.

Special Education Schools in Boaco, Carazo, Chinandega, Estelí, Granada and Matagalpa have benefited this year from upgraded transport to take students with disabilities on visits.

Improvement of school environments:

School environments have been improved through the construction of access ramps, adapted sanitary facilities and adequate signage. Computer rooms, play areas, sports facilities, vegetable gardens and kitchens are being built ready for September 2022