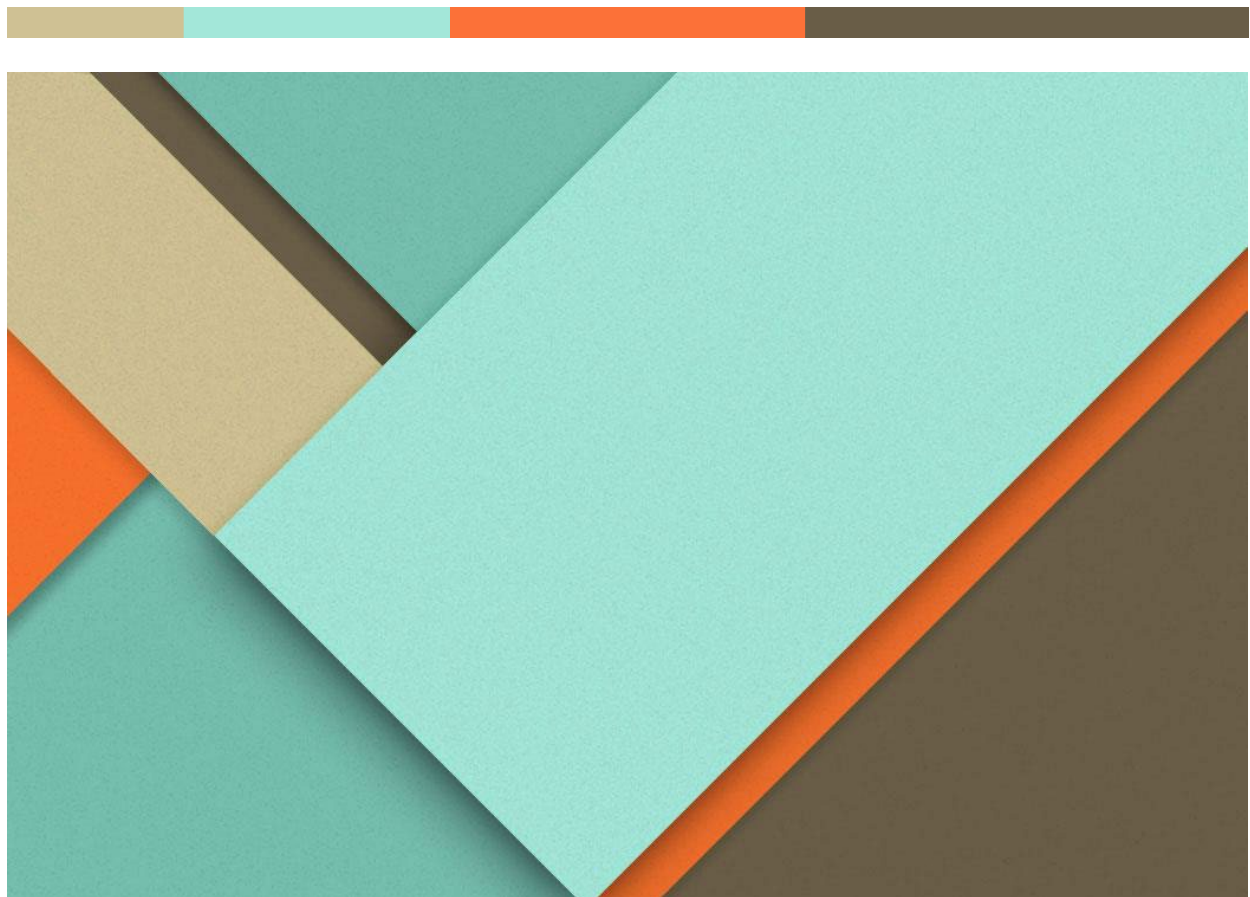




FINAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PROJECT FORTALECIMIENTO DE CAPACIDADES PARA UNA ESCUELA CIUDADANA Y DEMOCRÁTICA¹.

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¹ STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

Executive Summary

Background

The project *FORTALECIMIENTO DE CAPACIDADES PARA UNA ESCUELA CIUDADANA Y DEMOCRÁTICA*² arises in a national context characterized by persistent social, economic, and territorial divides, growing distrust of the state, and institutional weakening, compounded by corruption and citizen insecurity, which generate deep dissatisfaction with democracy. In this context, schools are seen as a strategic space for forming active and critical citizens, bringing together students, teachers, families, and the community around a common project. However, this potential is limited by the preeminence of practices focused on the transmission of content³, relegating citizenship education to a marginal or fragmented role.

Various assessments show segmentation and inequalities in the education system, along with environments marked by violence and exclusion, which particularly affect children and adolescents. Although there are policies and programs that promote student rights and participation, their implementation faces obstacles: scarcity of resources, insufficient teacher training in democratic approaches, and weak school-community coordination. As a outcome, student participation tends to be formalistic, with limited real impact. These gaps are accentuated in rural and marginal urban contexts, where adverse conditions limit access to educational opportunities. The project seeks to respond to this reality with a comprehensive approach that combines capacity building, institutional strengthening, and local and regional education policies.

Against this backdrop, the project emerges as a cooperative effort between *Mary MacKillop Today* (MMT) and *Fe y Alegría del Perú* (FyA), closely aligned with the institutional policies of both organizations. Fe y Alegría has a long history of managing public schools in agreement with the Ministry of Education, prioritizing vulnerable populations in coastal, mountain, and jungle areas with an inclusive, participatory, and transformative approach. Its experience in vulnerable communities and its pedagogical innovations consolidate it as a strategic ally. Previous evaluations have shown progress in the creation of spaces for dialogue and participation, but also the persistence of vertical practices and low incidence of student spaces. On the MMT side, from its mission and Strategic Plan 2023–2028, it promotes inclusive and quality education, sustainable livelihoods, and community strengthening. The

² STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

³ In addition to this characteristic identified by FyA, it should be noted that citizenship is also seen as the sole responsibility of the Social Studies department in primary school and DPCYC (and to a very limited extent in CCSS) in secondary school. As we will see in the recommendations, the project must also take this characteristic into account as a prerequisite for setting the goal of mainstreaming.



project is aligned with the educational and community pillars, as well as with the strategic lines of inclusion, gender equity, and intercultural respect. In its strategy for Peru (2019–2023), MMT recognizes education as a driver of social change and proposes interventions to improve quality and reduce inequalities, but identifies structural limitations such as low investment in rural areas, gender inequality, and low community participation in school management.

The FyA–MMT alliance has implemented previous experiences in teacher training, student leadership, and community participation, which have generated more democratic environments, but whose sustainability has depended on individual will and temporary projects. The current project seeks to institutionalize and consolidate these practices⁴.

The project is based on the premise that a citizen school is not built solely on individual changes in students and teachers, but also on institutional and community transformations that guarantee its sustainability. Its goal is to consolidate five Fe y Alegría public schools, located in rural and urban contexts in Peru (Puno, Junín, Amazonas, and Lima), as spaces for civic education, democratic participation, and the exercise of rights.

About the project

The overall objective is to design, implement, and validate a citizenship training program that develops socio-political skills in student leaders, teachers, and administrators, aimed at generating active citizenship committed to local and global realities, under the pillars of Popular Education.

A total of 2,177 students (5th grade to 5th year of secondary school), 75 teachers, and 11 members of management teams are participating. The intervention, conceived as a pilot experience, will subsequently be scaled up to other schools in the Fe y Alegría network.

The lines of action include:

- Design and implementation of differentiated training programs for administrators, teachers, and student leaders.
- Formation of intergenerational learning communities.
- Implementation of student-led civic actions.
- Continuous support for participating institutions.

The logical framework establishes three outcomes:

⁴ As we will see in the recommendations, this institutionalization and consolidation, involving cultural changes in schools, takes longer than the duration of this project.

1. Management teams promote a democratic culture in schools that facilitates civic engagement among members of the educational community.
2. Pedagogical innovation: teachers apply methodologies and strategies that promote citizenship based on local and global realities.
3. Student civic actions: students plan and implement initiatives that address issues of inequality and injustice in their environment.

In the general objective, socio-political capacities refer to the set of knowledge, attitudes, and actions that enable critical understanding of reality, the construction of critical subjectivities, and action to transform it. These are grouped into three dimensions: critical reading, construction of critical subjectivities, and skills for transformative action⁵.

OUTCOME 1, in accordance with the provisions of the project monitoring document and included in the evaluation matrix (P1), involves institutional and pedagogical management by managers, characterized by "the organic participation of each of the actors, where its members individually and collectively have the opportunity to express themselves, to listen to what others have to say, to engage in dialogue, to seek a group position, to take responsibility for an aspect of what has been decided, to evaluate the work done, to process conflicts, and to celebrate achievements and shared life" (Gordillo, 2023, p. 6). It also refers to "the existence of institutional structures, policies, and instruments that guarantee the participation of students, teachers, and families in school life" and to the "existence of management documents (PEI, PCI; internal regulations) that have incorporated the participation of students, teachers, and families in school life." (Gordillo, 2023, pp. 6-7). The following achievements are specifically established:

- (i) 20 administrators from 5 different teams demonstrate democratic attitudes in the institutional and pedagogical management of the school.
- (ii) Five participating schools have mechanisms and conditions in place for the participation of students, teachers, and families in school life.
- (iii) 05 participating schools have management documents that have incorporated the participation of different actors in the educational community (administrators, teachers, students, families, and representatives of the local community) in their development or updating.

⁵ Borja, B (2023).

For OUTCOME 2, active methodologies must link the local and global, highlight power relations, and promote social justice. For teachers and administrators, this includes techniques for critically analyzing reality, vindicating community knowledge, and connecting educational practice with political and economic factors. Specifically, it is mentioned that at the end of the program, teachers: (i) know and incorporate information about the student's personal, family, and social context into their learning plans; (ii) have participated in the training process developed by the project team and have participated in all training activities and strategies; and (iii) have incorporated pedagogical methodologies and strategies into their teaching for student learning.

OUTCOME 3 involves student leaders carrying out civic actions based on a critical diagnosis of their context, responding to local and global issues. This means that students:

- (i) after critically analyzing situations or problems in their local and/or global context and identifying issues of interest to the general population related to human rights and collective well-being, plan and carry out actions that contribute to addressing these issues. For these actions, the adolescents organize themselves into work teams.
- (ii) have a service-learning project proposal or other projects developed collaboratively with classmates, as well as administrators, teachers, and the community.
- (iii) They have developed an operational plan or work plan for the service-learning project or other projects.
- (iv) They have a plan for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the service-learning project or other projects.
- (v) There are no fewer than 20 students, and they have implemented the service-learning project or other projects from a stable organization.

Critical assumptions include⁶ :

- At the objective level: support from local governments and Decentralized Education Units for innovative pedagogical experiences, and the validity of the Fe y Alegría-MINEDU agreement.
- At the Outcome 1 level: appreciation by managers of activities that require time for the development of a democratic culture.
- At the Outcome 2 level: high teacher motivation to reverse the negative impacts of the pandemic on learning and civic skills.
- At the Outcome 3 level: openness among teachers to question practices that perpetuate inequality, especially towards girls and adolescents.

⁶ We believe that these critical assumptions can be reviewed based on baselines in schools—which will be seen in the recommendations—as it is essential to delve into what administrators value as democratic culture or what teachers understand by citizenship skills, or whether the questioning of practices also includes teaching practices.



Activities include virtual and face-to-face training programs, internships at model schools, experiential workshops, virtual courses, adaptation of materials, production of audiovisual resources, and public socialization events for civic actions.

Overall, the project combines training, support, and action to strengthen individual and institutional capacities that will enable the long-term sustainability of an education system that produces critical citizens committed to social transformation.

About the evaluation

The project evaluation was initially designed using a mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative tools to measure progress in terms of objectives and outcomes indicators in an objective and subjective manner. Quantitative techniques would make it possible to gauge the magnitude of the changes generated, while qualitative techniques—interviews and focus groups—would facilitate the integration of the various perspectives of the participating actors.

However, after a thorough analysis of the main project documents, especially the baseline reports, limitations were detected in the reliability and modification of the instruments, which compromised the comparability of the outcomes. Given this scenario, it was decided to reorient the evaluation toward a predominantly qualitative approach. This decision also responded to the complex nature of the changes sought: development of sociopolitical capacities, internalization of democratic values, strengthening of student leadership, and promotion of participatory spaces. Such transformations are difficult to capture in quantitative indicators without the risk of oversimplification.

The qualitative approach adopted offered flexibility, depth, and the possibility of more active participation by stakeholders in exploring the real effects of the project on schools, communities, and individuals.



The evaluation was organized around four objectives:

1. Analyze the impact of the project from the perspective of stakeholders.
2. Identify internal and external factors that favored or limited the development and achievements.
3. Determine conditions for the sustainability of the training program, considering the financial, individual, and organizational capacities of schools and local authorities, as well as the skills acquired by the beneficiaries.
4. Generate lessons learned to guide the scalability or replicability of the intervention⁷.

Data collection was carried out through interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, administrators, and the technical team (project design and management) of Fe y Alegría. The information was processed in matrices and systematized in reports by school. These findings were contrasted with the documentary analysis of key reports and documents, which allowed for the development of general conclusions and recommendations. The instruments used are presented in the annex.

Main outcomes

a) Regarding the objective and its outcomes

Overall, the project opened up spaces for developing socio-political capacities and promoting active citizenship: critical reading of reality, collaborative work, and skills for action. Meaningful experiences and visible outcomes were observed; however, progress was uneven and coverage was limited. Initiatives were concentrated on student leaders or certain teachers, which limited the project's reach at the institutional level. On the other hand, the support provided by teachers to students was often directive, so student autonomy was limited and is still in the process of development. Furthermore, some non-inclusive or discriminatory practices persisted in certain student contexts, suggesting that the construction of critical subjectivities has not yet been consolidated across the board.

At the institutional and pedagogical level, participation mechanisms were activated and active methodologies were promoted (projects, service learning, integration of some areas in some schools) that linked teaching with environmental issues. When clear procedures and participation routines were in place, the democratic experience was strengthened; where schedules, responsibilities, and stable criteria were lacking, participation became sporadic

⁷ The lessons learned will also lead to recommendations on the design of the program itself and some adjustments that we consider essential.



or inconsistent. Support materials and sessions were valued, but required adaptations to the context and school schedules; in addition, workload and logistical difficulties limited attendance and the extension of innovation to the teaching staff.

Regarding the citizen actions, there were initiatives with concrete impact and coordination with external actors; however, community outreach was intermittent, and sustainability depended on institutionalization and the permanence of actors. Many actions remained within the school environment, even though the project sought to have a greater impact on the community.

We consider the overall balance to be positive, although challenges remain in expanding coverage, strengthening student autonomy, and coordinating more with the community environment and face-to-face support mechanisms, in addition to virtual ones. The project generated valuable and inspiring capacities and examples and has increased interest and concern for the development of citizenship in schools, highlighting the need for its continuity.

b) Factors that influenced the outcomes

Among the facilitating factors, the following stand out: the commitment of administrators and some teachers (who were highly involved) to improving citizenship education; the existence of prior working networks between FyA and other institutions; and sustained technical support. The flexibility to adapt content to local contexts and the participatory approach of the project facilitated the appropriation of the proposals.

Limitations identified include: teacher workload overload, turnover of administrators and teachers, time constraints for collaborative work, and a school culture characterized by teaching practices that limit students' real autonomy. In some cases, socioeconomic conditions and violence in the environment restricted the participation of students and families. The pandemic left gaps in civic competencies and community cohesion, requiring additional efforts to reactivate participatory processes.

c) Conditions for sustainability

To ensure continuity, it is essential to institutionalize democratic practices in school policies and regulations, as well as to integrate educational content into the curriculum and annual work plans. Sustainability also depends on the continuous training of teaching and management staff—training that should not only focus on knowledge, but also on reflecting on school culture and teaching practices, and on induction mechanisms that ensure the



transfer of knowledge in the event of staff changes. Another element is the strengthening of partnerships with local authorities and community actors, which provide political support and resources to sustain initiatives. The active participation of families and their understanding of the value of citizenship education are conditions that need to be consolidated. Without these components, progress risks being diluted after the project ends.

d) Lessons learned

Experience shows that strengthening civic capacities requires long-term processes and the coordination of actions at the personal, institutional, and community levels. Meaningful student participation does not arise spontaneously, but must be built with support, concrete opportunities, and recognition from the school community. It is also evident that sustainability is enhanced when initiatives are integrated into institutional and curricular planning and management, and when collaborative networks with other actors are established. It is also necessary to link the development of socio-political capacities to the development of social science skills. The popular education approach, adapted to local contexts, has proven effective in linking learning to social reality and promoting the transformation of practices. However, the challenge remains to overcome top-down practices and ensure that student participation has a real impact on school and community decisions.

e) Recommendations

Regarding the overall objective: Develop socio-political capacities and active citizenship. It is recommended to strengthen the pedagogical capacities of teachers and administrators so that they can lead the approach beyond formal spaces for student participation, incorporating support networks and continuing education. It is essential to expand coverage to all students, ensuring that they develop critical and civic action skills, and to involve all areas, i.e., mainstream civic education throughout the school, both inside and outside the classroom. Issues such as gender equality and interculturality should be integrated across the board, and actions should be more closely linked to the community environment and even to deliberation on national and global issues. It is also advisable to move towards student autonomy in the planning and management of initiatives, through progressive transfer strategies and institutional commitment to their sustainability.



Regarding the Outcome 1: Strengthen democratic culture and institutional participation. The proposal is to institutionalize spaces for participation in school management instruments, coordinating with pedagogical practices and avoiding formalities. It is essential to expand participation to the entire educational community, including families, and to recognize their knowledge and experiences. It is suggested that the training of student leaders in communication, management, and conflict resolution be strengthened, and that participatory structures be given autonomy and resources. In addition, strategies need to be designed to ensure the permanence of democratic culture in the face of changes in authorities or teachers, maintaining pedagogical leadership and collaborative work among educational staff. On the other hand, and in relation to the above, it is recommended to expand the work on democratic culture, adding to participation aspects related to coexistence and the redistribution of power in schools, among others.

Regarding the Outcome 2: Innovate in pedagogical methodologies for citizenship. It is recommended that active methodologies be extended to all curricular areas and educational levels, with practical guidelines for their integration. Above all, however, we recommend reviewing and implementing pedagogies that lead to reflection on how to educate for citizenship (perhaps expanding participation to issues of deliberation is essential) in order to achieve the project's objectives: "linking the local and the global, highlighting power relations, and promoting social justice. For teachers and administrators, this includes techniques for critically analyzing reality, vindicating community knowledge, and connecting educational practice with political and economic factors." It is necessary to guarantee protected spaces for joint planning by teachers to work on projects, on capacities for deliberation on public issues, and on the full implementation of the competency-based approach that involves ongoing work on issues in all areas. On the other hand, optimize the use of shared materials, with contextualized guidance, and accompany their application with relevant training. In addition, a monitoring and feedback system should be implemented to ensure the sustained application of what has been learned , preventing innovation from being limited to specific areas or short periods.

Regarding the Outcome 3: Promote student civic actions with school and community outreach. The recommendations aim to prioritize actions with community impact and coordination with local actors. It is necessary to involve the entire student body, ensuring conscious and meaningful participation. Support for student leaders must guarantee training in democratic, but also participatory, leadership. It is suggested that a process of progressive strengthening of autonomy in the management of student projects be



established and that inter-institutional alliances with community organizations, municipalities, and other schools be promoted to enhance situated learning. This coordination would make it possible to broaden the territorial impact and consolidate the sustainability of civic actions, linking them more closely to the problems and opportunities of the immediate context.

Final reflections. The sustainability of the project requires institutional conditions, committed educational leadership, and a shared vision of participation, deliberation, citizenship, and democracy. The gaps identified reflect the fragmentation of policies and the lack of continuity in school teams. Documenting and systematizing experiences is crucial for replicating or scaling up the proposal. Ensuring sustained support, curricular integration, and autonomy to innovate will allow active citizenship and sociopolitical capacities to become established as permanent practices in educational communities.