

Teaching during the pandemic, the biggest challenge

On May 15 we commemorate the Teachers' Day in Mexico and the teacher Liz Hernández shares her experiences as a teacher in the midst of a pandemic; *"more than teachers, we are their second parents"*

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria, A.C. (CMT), implementing different strategies like the Program of Supportive Contribution, has been able to provide benefits to thousands of students through computers, cellphones, and tablets; mobile telephone and internet plans that contributed to education when in-person classes were suspended.

— *"Beyond being teachers, most of the time we feel like the parents of those kids"*, mentions Liz Antonia Hernández Montaña, who has worked as an elementary school teacher for 18 years, in an interview within the framework of the Teachers' Day, to be celebrated on May 15..

She teaches the first grade in an Elementary School in a neighborhood called "Heladio Ramírez López", in Oaxaca City, she emphasizes that teaching during the pandemic has been one of the biggest challenges she has ever faced.

"It has been very complicated to have ideal classes. The students and parents must have the suitable electronic devices. That is the moment when you can see the differences in the economy of each family. The parents who can have internet access find it easier to work with their kids".

Due to the fact that she works in one of the zones with the highest rates of poverty in Oaxaca City, the teacher has faced a grim reality, as many parents have to choose among staying with their kids following the instructions that teachers give, or putting food on the table.

"The parents are the ones who put food on the table and they do not have the chance to help their kids and follow up their homework. In my case, I was not able to work through video calls because online classes are much more complicated as I depend on the time that parents have available", mentions Hernández Montaña.

Buying a cellphone in partial payments

One of the experiences that the elementary school teacher shared with us, was about the moment when she had to buy a cellphone in partial payments to be able to send homework to her students, as the cellphone she previously had ran out of storage space since day one.

"Some partners had archaic computers and they had to buy a new one. Besides, they had to extend or renovate their internet service because most of them had a basic plan", the teacher affirms. *"We were not given any support by the Government, so each one of us had to buy our very own tools to work"*.

As a teacher I feel sorry because many of my students had to drop their studies. *"When we come back to in-person classes we all must be empathic: teachers, students, and parents"*.



"In my class I have the case of a girl who did not send me any homework for months so, I made a report with the principal. They called the parents and by the time they replied, they said that their daughter will not hand in any homework so, it would be better if she fails".

Liz Antonia Hernández Montaña
Elementary school teacher.

A pandemic that changed it all

"Any teacher leaves an everlasting mark, we cannot say the precise moment when the influence stops", that is how the historian Henry Adams described the teachers' performance. On May 15 we commemorate the Teachers' Day in Mexico, in the midst of a pandemic that restructured the teaching models.

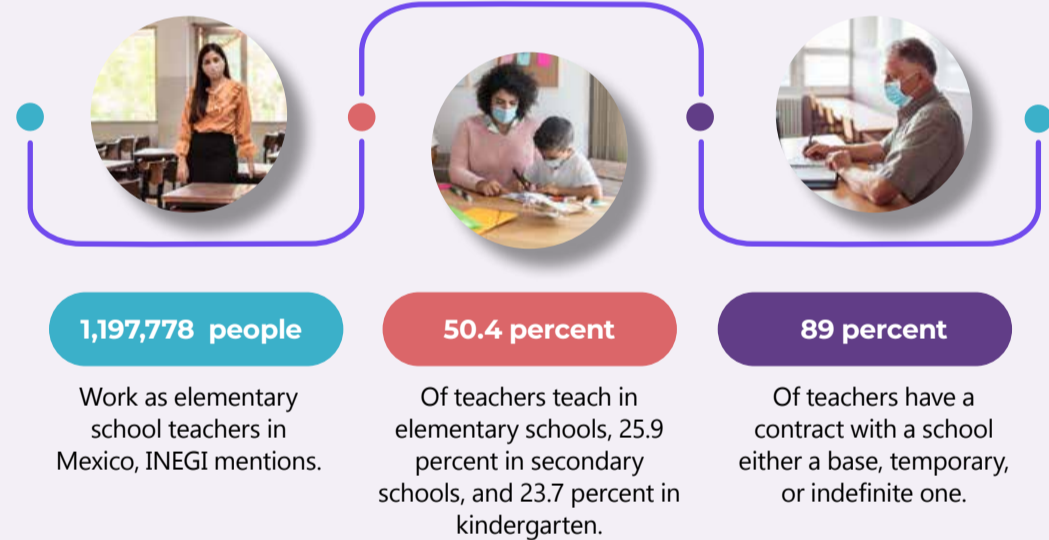
In the face of the sanitary contingency caused by COVID-19, more than 1.6 million teachers in elementary, high school, and universities; and 30 million students had to move far from the classrooms, but the classes had to keep going, a thing that became a challenge.

"The educational system in Mexico had to modify its processes with the purpose of encouraging home learning. This unexpected fact meant a big challenge for more than 1.6 million teachers who had to prepare classes and materials to guarantee the continuity of the educational process", as mentioned in the research *The sense of Teachers Tasks in times of Contingency*, published by the National Commission for the Continuous Improvement of Education.



The lack of suitable technology devices and connectivity in both cases, students and teachers, was and it is still one of the biggest problems that education in Mexico has to face in the midst of the sanitary contingency caused by COVID-19.

In numbers



CMT and education

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria, A.C. (CMT) identified the needs and it reacted. By means of the Program of Supportive Contribution, it helps teachers, school workers, and teachers with subsidies, technology supplies and tools to learn like: computers, tablets, laptops, educative contents, technology platforms to teach, connectivity and links to voice and data; that are able to support the educational activities of students and teachers.

The strategy that the Federal Government implemented to face the suspension of in-person classes was broadcasting classes on TV or having them online, disregarding the fact that thousands of families did not even have electricity at home, and much less TV, computers or cellphones.

CMT and the infrastructure that it has developed for 24 years, created the Program of Supportive Contribution, as a part of the Network of Education in its Welfare Ecosystem Model, to provide technology tools and connectivity to thousands of students and teachers who need that.

As an example of those actions we have the program "Conéctate" (Get connected), promoted by the municipality of Durango that was presented last March 31, 2021. The objective of that strategy is to provide students, teachers and school workers with access to subsidies in digital connectivity and technology devices such as laptops and tablets.

This model was firstly promoted in that municipality and later in the whole state. It helps the inhabitants there, especially low-income families, to find options to access distance learning through subsidies, incentives, and supports. The program "Conéctate" is available in the 39 municipalities in Durango, that is to say, about 12 thousand people.

Congregación Mariana Trinitaria congratulates all the teachers on their day, and also we reiterate the fact that teachers are not alone in this important mission to prepare tomorrow's society.