

Uruguay

In 2007, Uruguay launched an education initiative on social security which aims to inform the population of their rights and obligations, promote active participation in the improvement of the social security system and extend its coverage. The Programme is part of a comprehensive approach to build a fairer society and ensure decent lives for all.

Through a joint effort between the Social Security Institution (BPS) and the institutions responsible for education and culture, the Government of Uruguay introduced content on social security to the curricula used in all schools and professional training institutions at all levels.

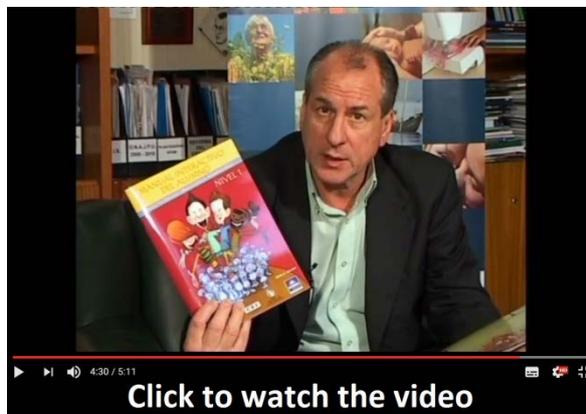
To date, a programme called “Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security” reaches 100 per cent of students, including children from 5 years of age, adolescents attending high school and adults attending vocational training institutions or finalizing formal studies.

Uruguay has demonstrated that creating a culture of social security constitutes an important tool to extend social security and improve its functioning.

National social protection floors (SPFs) guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working age and older persons.

185 countries have adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), an approach to achieve universal social protection.

This note presents a successful country experience of building a culture of social protection.



Main lessons learned

- The development of a culture of social protection contributes to coverage extension.
- Building culture is a country-specific process that concerns society as a whole and relies on strong political will over time.
- The “Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security” programme is part of a three pillar strategy: education; public awareness raising; and training staff working in the social security institution. This strategy ensures sufficient institutional capacity to respond to well-informed and active beneficiaries.
- The Programme is compulsory and it has been implemented progressively in all public and private schools. It reaches all children, adolescents and adults attending learning institutions starting from the age of 5.
- Formal agreements between the Social Security Institution and institutions in the areas of education and culture guaranteed the development of the programme and its sustainability.
- Teachers, students and social security experts participated in the pedagogical design and development of the training manuals. This process ensured the appropriation and continuous improvement of the materials.

1. Why was the Programme implemented?

In Uruguay, the Social Security Institution plans, coordinates and administers social security according to International Labour Organization conventions and recommendations, particularly the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). Currently, 97 per cent of people above 65 years old receive a pension and 87 per cent of jobs are in the formal economy.

In 2005, the Government of Uruguay implemented public policies to extend social protection to the vulnerable and poor populations. Fieldwork showed that hundreds of individuals who qualified for social protection benefits did not have access due to a lack of knowledge and information. The Government developed and implemented a social security education programme based on the belief that the main obstacle to exercise the right to social protection was a lack of knowledge.

The Uruguayan constitution guarantees free and non-religious education for the entire population. The mandatory educational period totals 14 years and the literacy rate is 98 per cent. This is a key factor in guaranteeing the development of a social security culture through the education system.

The “Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security” programme started its activities in 2006 as a result of having a universal social protection system and a sound education system.

The Programme is based on two key convictions: (i) exercising a right and fulfilling its inherent obligations relies on having knowledge of that right; and (ii) the social construction of the social protection system can only be achieved through the active participation of citizens.

“In the field of social security education and training, programmes and actions should be coordinated with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the National Administration of Public Education, the University of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay and the Vocational School, as well as with private education institutions and international organizations.”

Strategic Plan – Social Security Institution-BPS 2005-2010

2. A culture of social security: Towards universal social protection?

Uruguay had already achieved universal legal coverage for social security at the start of the Programme. However, many Uruguayans were not informed of

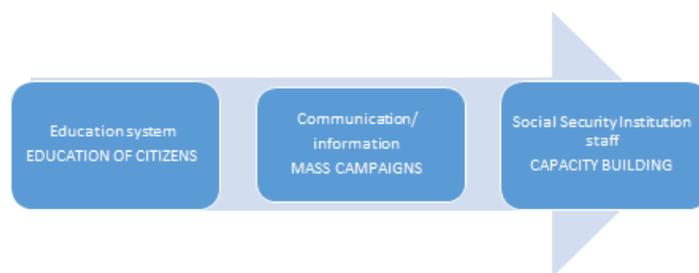
their rights. The Programme has therefore contributed to make the right to social security a reality.

The Programme is based on the following convictions:

- Citizenship is exercised by every social group, by all actors and at every age.
- Education and information are the most powerful instruments for social change.
- Social security institutions should have the capacity to respond efficiently to the requirements of beneficiaries.

Consequently, the programme strategy relies on three axes that are linked and mutually reinforcing:

- education for children and teenagers in educational environments through the “Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security” programme;
- public information and communication campaigns; and
- capacity building for Social Security Institution staff.



3. The “Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security” programme

The Programme arises as a result of institutional agreements between the Social Security Institution and the National Administration of Public Education. These agreements formalize the use of the education system to introduce social security as a mandatory subject within curricula delivered at all public and private schools.

Interdisciplinary teams of teachers and Social Security Institution technical staff gradually developed the training manuals starting in 2006. Students also participated in the design, development and validation of the training manuals.

The main contents of the manuals are detailed as follows:

- the concept of social protection as a fundamental human right;
- solidarity and responsibility as main values;
- the implementation of solidarity through social security contributions and benefits; and
- the Social Security Institution (BPS) as the state body responsible for the administration of the social security system.

The educational materials were designed to be addressed from different areas of study and

perspectives according to the age of the students, including through civic education, mathematics (calculations of contributions) and biology (health, maternity and prevention). Students' learning outcomes on social security are evaluated.

Teachers attend capacity building sessions based on specific training materials.

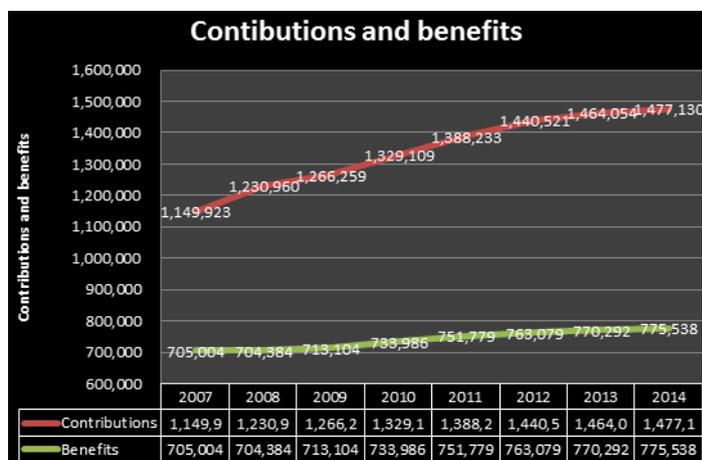
School cycle	Manuals	
Preschool (5 to 6 years old)	Growing up together	
Primary education (7 to 11 years old)	Interactive notebook: Know your rights and obligations to social security	
High school – first cycle (12 to 15 years old)	Manual 1: Know your rights and obligations on social security	
High school – second cycle and professional training (16 to 19 years old)	Manual 2: Know your rights and obligations to social security	
Non-formal education (non-age bound)	Manual 3: Know your rights and obligations on social security	

The Social Security Institution's Center of Studies on Social Security is responsible for coordinating the implementation and monitoring of the Programme.

The Programme is financed by the Social Security Institution and the National Administration of Public Education. Both institutions include the programme costs in their human resources budgets. The Social Security Institution covers printing costs and the National Post Administration delivers the manuals free of charge.

4. Impact of the education programme on the population

As a result of Uruguay's public and economic policies, the coverage of social security has increased gradually since 2005. The social security culture resulting from the implementation of the education programme is one of the key factors that has contributed to the extension of coverage. Between the start of the programme in 2006 and 2014, the number of people registered for social security increased 22 per cent and the amount of pension benefits grew 15 per cent.



The "Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security" programme has delivered 1.2 million manuals through the education system and professional training institutions. In an effort to make the content accessible to everyone, braille versions of the first three manuals have been produced for students with visual impairments.

The impact of the Programme goes beyond the students as it impacts the family as a whole. Evaluation studies highlight positive outcomes and point out that the Programme's main goals are being reached through its appropriation by the education system, institutions and students.

At the international level, the Uruguayan experience provides a model for other countries. Several international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization, the International Conference on Social Security and the Ibero-American Social Security Organization, have invited Uruguay to present their experiences with the Programme at international events and South-South exchanges. Likewise, several countries have requested support from Uruguay to design their own education programmes to develop a social security culture.

5. Main challenges

To date, the "Know Your Rights and Obligations to Social Security" programme is well-consolidated, institutionalized and integrated. It follows a permanent extension process. The most important challenge for the programme is long-term sustainability.

In the coming years, the Programme should evolve and change to support structural changes that impact the social security system. The Programme should also be ready to face new challenges, such as the aging of the population, strong international migration flows, increasing unemployment and climate and environmental changes that affect the population and the social security system.

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