

“Inclusion is my Dream”

By Ochoa Ayala, Fundación 11:11, México



Who does not like to feel that he or she belongs to a place, a community, a space or to something? The sense of belonging is related to the identity we all develop throughout our life, and provides a sample of who we are; for example: I am a woman, an activist, a dreamer, young, Mexican, etc. The way I identify myself, and the words I choose to describe it, helps me to connect with like-

minded people.

Being a young, dreamer, activist, Mexican woman led me to CIVICUS:

“A worldwide community of informed, inspired, committed citizens engaged in confronting the challenges facing humanity.”¹

When I discovered its vision, I could relate to it. I immediately knew that I wanted to be part of this community and that, on the other side of the planet, in another hemisphere, there were people with a vision very similar to mine, willing to cooperate and create alliances so that humanity’s challenges could be fought together, uniting isolated efforts.

Then, I entered my details, and every week I received its newsletters, information on its activities, and so on, until one day I got an email, inviting me to participate in the Global Learning Exchange and AGM where there would be discussions on inclusion and diversity in Montevideo, Uruguay. Without a second's thought, I decided to send my application, never imagining I had just opened the door to one of the best experiences of my life. Some months later, they confirmed I had been selected, and on 13th December I was on a plane heading to the learning exchange.

Over three days, we talked about the meaning of diversity and inclusion. To begin with, the participants and the facilitators were all from different countries, spoke different languages,

¹ <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/who-we-are/about-civicus>

and had diverse looks, beliefs, and ideas. However, it did not matter, and we exchanged experiences and created new concepts. By interacting with each other we brought to life, and to reality, the concepts of diversity and inclusion, since these two words mean nothing if they are not followed up by action. We saw, firsthand, that differences enrich ideas, and that willingness to listen gives rise to inclusion.

Together, we concluded that diversity is the richness of the different, and inclusion is the recognition of that. These two concepts coexist since they need each other to strengthen every action we carry out for humanity.

Before this meeting, I saw diversity and inclusion as a dream. I had a longing that, in my country, there would be people encouraging action to welcome the different, as I had been working on it for a while but this aspiration had not materialised.

Unfortunately, we live in an age of rhetoric and a lack of action: people talk about acceptance, there are laws on inclusion but, in reality, it seems to be more an exclusion by difference, that is, "If you are different, join with those who are different like you." In such cases, where is the inclusion? Is it an unattainable dream? CIVICUS cleared up my doubt by including me in a team where differences prevailed. Thanks to this, I learned that willingness, respect, humility, and recognition are attitudes that any human being can express for each other, and by doing so we can get to know the other and integrate him into our world.

Do not forget that since the beginning of our existence, we have all belonged to a world in which we all must coexist, and that we all have the opportunity to make valuable contributions to it.

Thank you CIVICUS for making my dream come true!