

## Latin America & the Caribbean COVID-19 Education Response

[31 March 2020]

### I. SITUATION ANALYSIS

As COVID-19 has grown in the **Latin America & the Caribbean (LAC) region**, Ministries of Education (MoEs) have started to close schools progressively at preschool, primary and secondary levels. As of March 30<sup>th</sup>, **schools are closed in 23 countries and 12 independent states in the region. As a result, it is estimated that over 159 million children<sup>[1]</sup> have been affected in LAC, representing more than 95% of enrolled learners in LAC.**

While the length of school closures is still uncertain, an extended interruption of education can have serious consequences: children risk to fall far behind in their learning and those who were already vulnerable may never return to school. Moreover, closure of schools also entails the interruption of access to other important basic services provided by schools such as school feeding, health, water, sanitation, hygiene, recreational programs, extracurricular activities, as well as pedagogical and psychosocial support.

Therefore, the rapid planning and implementation of mitigation measures is of paramount importance. While educational services must be made available to all children and adolescents, vulnerable groups such as migrants, ethnic minorities, children with disabilities and children and adolescents at risk of dropping out and out-of-school children (OOSC) are of concern and call for special measures.

**Table: COVID-19 Impact on Education in the Latin America & the Caribbean Region (LAC)**

Note: The below estimated number is collated from information either from UIS database or from UNICEF Country Office sources. The data will be updated once a standardized method is agreed upon.

Country	Schools Closures	Duration	Estimated Number of Learners Affected
Argentina	Country-wide	Until 31 March	14,202,149
Belize	Country-wide	Until 20 April	107,891
Bolivia	Country-wide	Until 4 April	2,612,837
Brazil	Localized	Until 15 April	44,326,926
Chile	Country-wide	Until 17 April	4,891,092
Colombia	Country-wide	Until further notice	11,532,903
Costa Rica	Country-wide	Until 13 April	1,317,482
Cuba	Country-wide	Until 20 April	2,202,822
Dominican Republic	Country-wide	Until 13 April	3,006,800
Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA)*	Country-wide	Until further notice	388,418
Ecuador	Country-wide	Until further notice	5,131,897

[1] UNESCO Institute of Statistics <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>

<b>El Salvador</b>	Country-wide	Until 22 April	1,604,845
<b>Guatemala</b>	Country-wide	Until 31 March	4,559,618
<b>Guyana</b>	Country-wide	Until 3 April	204,600
<b>Haiti**</b>	Country-wide	Until further notice	2,210,221
<b>Honduras</b>	Country-wide	Until 3 April	2,285,222
<b>Jamaica</b>	Country-wide	Until 13 April	627,156
<b>Mexico</b>	Country-wide	Until 20 April	37,589,611
<b>Nicaragua</b>	No closure	N/A	N/A
<b>Panama</b>	Country-wide	Until further notice	998,348
<b>Paraguay</b>	Country-wide	Until further notice	1,744,889
<b>Peru</b>	Country-wide	Until 30 March	9,911,513
<b>Suriname</b>	Country-wide	Until 15 April	144,248
<b>Uruguay</b>	Country-wide	Until further notice	956,304
<b>Venezuela</b>	Country-wide	Until 13 April	6,866,822
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 countries and independent states with school closures (23 country-wide and 1 localized)</b>		<b>159,424,614</b>

(\*) The office in Barbados serves the Eastern Caribbean Area (Anguilla, Antigua y Barbuda, Barbados, Virgin Islands (UK), Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad y Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands).

(\*\*) Figures for Haiti were based on data reported from the Haiti Reference Website, as data for this country was missing in the UIS database:

<https://www.haiti-reference.com/pages/plan/education/education-chiffres-et-faits/>

In the coming weeks, a major challenge for governments will be to ensure continuity of learning of children during school closure, including of the most vulnerable children. This will require Ministries of Education to quickly adopt new, innovative approaches and develop partnerships to deliver learning remotely and effectively. Ministries will also have to develop long-term contingency plans, particularly for safe school operations in preparation for the re-opening of schools, and continuously engage in messaging for students, teachers, parents/caregivers and the community on COVID-19.

MoEs have developed different options to maintain educational services through distance learning initiatives, including educational online platforms but also mass communication means that do not require the access to internet such as radio/TV. While countries have started implementing distance learning modalities through digital platforms, these modalities are not guaranteed throughout the region, nor do all families have access to them, especially the most vulnerable. Therefore, ensuring continuity of learning for all children, including the most vulnerable, will be the main challenge for national governments. In addition, MoEs are also looking into ways to ensure that other relevant school services (school feeding, WASH, health, hygiene, psychosocial support) are available to all children.

UNICEF Country Offices and Regional Office in the LAC region are providing provide technical support to MoEs to ensure safe and continued learning for all children, as well as coordinate their actions and efforts with other program sectors such as nutrition, protection, C4D, ECD, WASH, inter alia.

## II. GOVERNMENT COVID-19 EDUCATION RESPONSE PLANS

Governments in the LAC region are at different stages in education planning and response to COVID-19. Currently several countries in the region are ensuring the continuity of education through remote learning programs during school closures. **Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, ECA, Guyana, El Salvador, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay** are offering various educational proposals through online MoE platforms. Other countries in the region such as **Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Panama and Venezuela** have designed virtual education proposals to integrate families with less resources without access to technological equipment or the Internet, using voice memos via WhatsApp, Social Networks, television and radio programs. Some countries such as **Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela** are exploring alternative options to continue their school feeding, subsidies and WASH programs in schools.

Remote learning strategies vary according to the country, but almost all governments in the region are exploring different channels for education delivery, mainly through television, radio and internet platforms. In some cases, MoEs are distributing home learning kits (exercises, books) for families with less resources. Across the LACRO region, a key challenge is ensuring equity in learning: reaching children in rural, migrants, refugees and returnees, indigenous and remote areas through various alternative options. In addition to school closure, some governments are also adjusting the academic year and extending school breaks with the purpose of planning.

To date, the education response to COVID-19 in the region primarily addresses the following areas:

### 1. Continuity of education through remote learning programs during school closures by:

- Establishing education taskforces, committees or groups at national levels for school continuity;
- MoE coordination with radio and television institutions to define the education sector current needs and design education programs for children, adolescents and their families;
- Putting national curriculum online and/or designing and launching national MoE online programs for remote school continuity;
- Providing educational guidelines through open television channels and radio stations with national reach, emphasizing issues related to COVID 19; and
- Maintaining school feeding services, subsidies, WASH, hygiene, and other basic services during school closures.

### 2. Messaging to promote learning and recreational activities, infection prevention and control, and to promote psychosocial wellbeing of students, teachers, parents/caregivers by:

- Developing informative apps on coronavirus prevention and management; and
- Preparing instructional videos on handwashing and then disseminating them to schools via WhatsApp, social networks and TV.

### 3. Flexibilization of the academic year with the purpose of planning and developing risk reduction strategies on continuous learning and safe school operations by:

- Assessing the needs for planning continuity of education based on duration of school closure;
- Assessing the needs for psychosocial support for children, parents and teachers during school closures;
- Developing “ministerial instructions” that include pedagogical guidelines for the execution of activities at all education and school circuits levels;
- Providing open access virtual training to teachers at various educational levels;

- Carrying out pedagogical planning so that schools can refer the relevant academic material to its students and they can continue studying remotely; and
- Supporting plans and preparations for the safe reopening of schools.

### III. UNICEF COUNTRY OFFICE COVID-19 EDUCATION RESPONSE PLAN

Since the start of the outbreak in the Latin America & the Caribbean region, the **twenty-four UNICEF national offices in the region** have supported the MoEs in their response to COVID-19. Below are the main actions taken so far by each country CO in the LAC region:

- 1) **Argentina.** The CO is supporting the national program "We Continue Educating" through websites, public TV and radio programs with pedagogical resources for educational continuity, including the preparation of short videos with the support of influencers/experts in the educational sector, as well as the design of strategies to guarantee educational continuity in contexts with limited access or without connectivity. Furthermore, the office is also supporting and strengthening the information and communication systems by monitoring and updating the reservoir of communication resources; campaigning to mobilize adolescents as agents of change in coordination with the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development; and the development of informative short videos with guidelines for psychosocial support.
- 2) **Barbados.** The office in Barbados serves the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA), including ECA's twelve independent states. The UNICEF ECA Representative together with the education team held detailed virtual meetings with high level officials of the Ministries of Education (Permanent Secretaries and Chief Education officers) for all the 12 ECA independent states. The meeting included (a) the sharing of PAHO guidelines on COVID-19, (b) the adverse effects of COVID-19 on education system, and (c) the status of school closure in each country.
- 3) **Belize.** UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, PAHO/WHO, and the Belize Red Cross, reviewed a national education response plan to COVID-19 which included advocacy and preparation for students, teachers and families for school closure and continuity of learning.
- 4) **Bolivia.** UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are working on a plan that includes a phase one focused on the informative guide on COVID-19 for parents facilitated by UNICEF LACRO: *Guide for parents: What to do so that our children continue learning at home*; a phase two, an initial lesson plan package, that is, a package of Lesson Plans for Primary Level and another one for secondary level; and lastly a phase three, focused on monitoring and follow-up system for curricular progress at different educational levels, as well as the adjustment of administrative aspects to validate and make these online educational processes official.
- 5) **Brazil.** The CO coordinated the support to continuity of learning during school closure with the MoE, municipal and State Secretaries of Education. The CO is providing all education and C4D materials to the education group created to give response to the COVID-19 in the country, formed by the MoE, state and municipal secretaries, the private sector and civil society organizations. The group is preparing materials to be launched via digital platforms such as podcasts, radio, TV, and will use Spotify and radio to reach the most remote areas. In addition, the office is also adapting their interventions at the temporary learning spaces (TLS) and child friendly spaced (CFS) for Venezuelan migrants to identify community leaders to help with the maintenance of education activities. The idea is to use radio and podcasts as well as digital communication materials.

- 6) **Chile.** Lines of work to support the MoE are still being evaluated.
- 7) **Colombia.** The CO has suspended all activities that take place in public schools, as well as face-to-face classes of learning circles. The services provided through learning circles have been replaced by the provision of hard copies of the pedagogical materials for families so that they can work at home with children; tutors, on their end, will provide learning and socio-emotional support to children via telephone. Furthermore, the CO has also supported the provision of food up until the compulsory quarantine in the country started on March 24<sup>th</sup>.  
The education cluster of education in emergencies has been activated and the CO is currently working on the response plan. It is planned that the education cluster focuses on the provision of school feeding (including here transport, logistical and cash transfer support), school kits, and digital kits (tablets) so that all children can have access to the digital content of the National Ministry of Education (MEN).
- 8) **Costa Rica.** UNICEF, together with the Academic Vice-Ministry of the MoE are prioritizing on distance learning and the immediate strengthening of the MoE remote learning system, while maintaining this support after the current emergency response in order to get the remote learning system ready and available for future emergencies. Education coordination mechanisms have been activated with the Ministry of Public Education.
- 9) **Cuba.** The CO is providing technical support to the national government in the management of the government response to COVID-19, including sharing training guides for COVID-19 preparation and response. In addition, the office has provided 22,000 10L-tanks to support the sanitization of schools with hypochlorite.
- 10) **Ecuador.** The CO has provided technical support to the adaptation of education in emergencies (EiE) guidelines and the development and strengthening of mechanisms to train teachers, mentors and advisors in the implementation of adapted guidelines, as well as the preparation of return to school.
- 11) **Dominican Republic.** The RO has supported the MoE with the adaptation and design of posters with preventive guidelines on COVID-19 aimed at students, teachers and families, as well as with the preparation of an instructional video on handwashing disseminated by MoE to all schools via WhatsApp and the UNICEF website. The office has also contributed to the design of a proposal for virtual education designed to reach families with medium or low educational levels without access to technological equipment or the Internet, using voice memos via WhatsApp and radio programs. With the support of the government, the CO has also supported the elaboration of a protocol for the distribution of food for children.
- 12) **El Salvador.** The Office has supported the identification and selection of materials that can complement the MoE pedagogical orientations related to COVID-19, and with information and activities that families can do at home with their children. UNICEF is looking into complementing these pedagogical orientations with guidance on artistic, recreational activities, etc. These materials are available on different platforms such as the MoE portal, social networks, radio and national TV.
- 13) **Guatemala.** The CO has supported the government with the design of the #AprendoEnCasa (#IlearnAtHome) strategy, an education program delivered by TV, radio and print media; with the upgrade of virtual education platforms aligned with the curriculum (PruebaT.org, PRONEA, WhatsApp), and with the development of a digital platform for parents and caregivers so that they can promote reading. Finally, the Office has also contributed to the

design and development of an education blog, in which education experts provide educational and psychosocial support to students and parents.

- 14) **Guyana & Suriname.** In Suriname, UNICEF is providing technical support in developing a response taking global guidance and best practices into consideration, looking into funding opportunities through the CO COVID-response team and reviewing its annual workplan to see which activities can be scaled up to also benefit the COVID-19 response. On the other hand, in Guyana the CO is sharing with the MoE all digital learning resources that are available for use on the MoE's learning channel. The office is still awaiting the MoE's response to their suggestions of UNICEF's support to systems strengthening.
- 15) **Haiti.** Prior to the confirmation of the cases, the MoE and UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, launched an awareness-raising campaign among the education sector and the Haitian population through the dissemination of information and key messages on the prevention of COVID-19. UNICEF confirmed its support to the MoE, to limit the potentially devastating effects of the disease on the education system and on the right to education in times of emergency. The CO is now focusing on supporting the Ministry of Education to develop a comprehensive and coordinated COVID-19 response plan; developing and implementing guidelines for safe school operations after a COVID-19 outbreak, as well as teaching and learning materials that support home study during school closures.
- 16) **Honduras.** The CO has supported the preparation of communication materials for children and the general public about COVID-19 prevention and has assisted with the filming of classes. Even though the education cluster has not been activated yet, working groups have been already established.
- 17) **Jamaica.** The office has shared the ECD Covid-19 activity book with two newspapers and asked them to consider printing them as a supplement within their regular papers and post it in their social media platforms. It has also created video material for parents on how to speak with children about the virus and drafted a set of games about COVID-19 that can be played remotely to promote social distancing. Furthermore, the office is also working on ECD learning kits for the approximately 800 children under 6 and their families who are in the country quarantine zones.
- 18) **Mexico.** The CO has supported the development of an emergency curriculum and identification of minimum learning requirements to pass the school year. Currently, UNICEF, with the support of LACRO, is mobilizing an international curricula expert to support this process. The office has also supported the development of communication materials on topics such as positive parenting, activities at home and socio-emotional work.
- 19) **Nicaragua.** Although Nicaragua has been the only country without school closure, school attendance has considerably dropped throughout the country. It is expected that the MoE requests support with the dissemination of hygiene measures and with the purchase of hygiene kits for schools. On the other hand, the CO has offered support to the MoE in the case of the temporary closure of schools, as well as to improve the available material for distance education.
- 20) **Panama.** Panama CO work has focused on prevention through communication platforms such as social networks, TV and radio interviews, etc. and the delivery of supplies to the health sector in coordination with PAHO (masks, gloves and protective glasses). The office has also supported the production of a resource guide for parents on five axes (routines and schedules,

emotional management, cleaning and prevention, play, reading and storytelling). and the production of videos and radio spots for children up to seven years in alliance with MEDCOM (a TV channel) and MoE.

- 21) Paraguay.** The CO has developed a guide for families on stimulation in early childhood with an inclusive approach, video and audio capsules to promote reading at home for children from 0 to 6 years old and, video capsules and audios of math and STEAM activities aimed at students from 1st to 6th grade. The CO has also advocated for the reactivation of school feeding distribution and has made available to the MoE a repository that contains information on school feeding. It also contributed to the creation of guides on stimulation and development in early childhood, the prevention of COVID-19, as well as some free learning resources. Lastly, UNICEF offered technical assistance to the development of a strategy for distributing printed materials, especially in areas with limited internet access.
- 22) Peru.** The Office has developed information cards and a brief online course for teachers. After school closure, UNICEF focused on the preparation of information booklets for managers and parents. At the request of the Vice-Ministry of Pedagogical Management, a meeting of experts on good practices in distance education was convened to inform the design of the 'I Learn at Home' strategy announced by the Minister of Education. Since the launch of the strategy "I learn at home" on March 20<sup>th</sup>, UNICEF has supported the review of educational sessions for rural secondary education and it is exploring additional support for educational radio and television sessions.
- 23) Uruguay.** Given the rapid response of the formal education system to promote educational continuity and the extensive coverage of the Ceibal Plan<sup>1</sup> in the territory, UNICEF sought to collaborate with the authorities in order to support education at home through an open-access online repository to prevent the spread of COVID-19, games and story books, as well as a targeted psycho-emotional support guide for mothers and fathers to facilitate living together and manage time at home. Furthermore, in coordination with the Plan Ceibal, UNICEF is organizing a webinar with specialists to provide psycho-emotional support to mothers and fathers. Lastly, Instagram Live sessions are being organized with specialists in health, education and psychology so that parents can ask questions live.
- 24) Venezuela.** The CO is supporting the implementation of the ministerial program *Each Family One School (Cada Familia una Escuela* in Spanish) through the development of content appropriate to distance education modalities, including audio and video micros for broadcasting on radio and TV, as well as files for broadcasting by telephone, social media and printed material. The office is also providing financial support through its implementing partners so that most vulnerable families have also the necessary resources to have access the program. Lastly, the office is also providing technical support to monitor the program execution.

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<sup>1</sup> Plan Ceibal was created in 2007 as a plan for inclusion and equal opportunities with the aim of supporting Uruguayan educational policies with technology. Plan Ceibal provides programs, educational resources and teacher training courses that transform the ways of teaching and learning. For further information kindly check the official website: <https://www.ceibal.edu.uy/en/institucional>

#### IV. REGIONAL OFFICE SUPPORT STRATEGY

Over the last couple of weeks, the Regional Office Education Team has been in constant communication with LAC Country Offices to assist with technical support, share information, and facilitate knowledge-sharing. The below are the main action points that UNICEF LACRO is focusing on:

- Support the development of regional and national education response plans for all countries in the region to respond to the COVID-19 crisis within the education sector as a mean to provide support to governments in its actions and strategies. This includes the transition back to school, the flexibilization of the school year and exams, as well as the development and establishment of bridge programs.
- Support the implementation of safe school operations guidance with government and local partners while schools were still opened, including guidance on handwashing and sanitation in schools, revision of protocols, and training and support for school staff.
- Provide technical support to assist the identification and development of context-appropriate strategies to ensure educational continuity through flexible and distance home-based learning methods delivered through on-line platforms, but also through, mobile phone, radio and TV depending on available resources. This, in turn, involves (1) the adaptation of educational content, (2) orientation to parents and caregivers on how to support children studying at home, and (3) orientation on psychosocial support to children, teachers, parents and other caregivers.
- Support the identification and/or development and implementation of simple monitoring and evaluation systems of learning to guide teachers and educators and this way ensure effectiveness of pedagogical strategies and continuity of learning.
- Support the development of guidance and content for parents and caregivers to assist children studying at home, including psycho-social support and the development of special measures to ensure access to distance learning for most vulnerable children: migrants, refugees, children with disabilities, children out-of-school, and indigenous children.
- Support the identification of learning opportunities based on stimulation and games, as well as facilitating positive environments protected from violence, abuse and discrimination.
- Support research, collection, organization and dissemination of materials developed by Ministries and partners from this region and others in the four official languages of the region (Spanish, English, French and Brazilian Portuguese), such as good practices, recommendations for children, parent and teachers, key prevention actions, online learning content, and digital tools inter alia. The Regional Office is also working on the development of an online database available to all governments and other external partners of the education sector.



## V. REGIONAL RESOURCES

- [LACRO COVID-19 Education SharePoint](#) (for UNICEF Staff)
- COVID-19 Education Section Platform in UNESCO: An open access resource that provides a wide range of
  - ✓ [Thematic resources from UNICEF & other members of the Regional Education Group](#)
  - ✓ Data on the [national education responses from all MoEs in the LAC region](#)

## VI. BUDGET AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

To date, the Regional Office has secured USD 240,000 for the COVID-19 response. The below table shows the budget received by COs in the LAC region. However, please note that COs are still in the process of adjusting their work plans and financial resources for their COVID-19 response at the national level.

Country	Budget	Donor/Grant
Argentina	70,000	GTF
Belize	70,000	GTF
Bolivia	70,000	
Brazil	70,000	GTF
Chile	70,000	GTF
Colombia	70,000	GTF
Costa Rica	70,000	GTF
Cuba	70,000	GTF
Dominican Republic	70,000	GTF
Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA)*	350,000	GTF (70,000) + GPE (280,000)
Ecuador	70,000	GTF
El Salvador	70,000	GPE
Guatemala	70,000	GPE
Guyana	70,000	GPE
Haiti**	70,000	GPE
Honduras	70,000	GPE
Jamaica	70,000	GTF
Mexico	70,000	GTF
Nicaragua	70,000	GPE
Panama	70,000	GTF
Paraguay	70,000	GTF
Peru	70,000	GTF
Uruguay	70,000	GTF
Venezuela	70,000	GTF