

LACRO COVID-19 Education Response: Reaching the Most Vulnerable Children

[August 6th, 2020]



UNICEF/1012195/Sokol

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Ministries of Education and their partners have launched multiple initiatives to ensure continuity of learning and access to education. Distance learning strategies have varied according to the country and different contexts, among them we can mention the establishment of online learning platforms, delivering education through mass media such as radio and television, improving connectivity conditions for teachers and students, distributing home learning kits (books, exercise books), etc.

However, despite the great efforts, one of the biggest challenges has been how to ensure access to education for children from families with fewer resources, from rural areas, migrants, refugees and returnees, indigenous people and those with disabilities. Although the different modalities of distance education used until now have made it possible to guarantee continuity for many children and adolescents, there is still a large gap in the options available to achieve equity and access for all.

The availability of educational materials in local languages and in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, indigenous children, and those living in remote areas or who are migrants, for example, is still a major challenge.

In the framework of UNICEF LACRO Education response to COVID-19, a mapping to identify the main initiatives to ensure safe, quality and continued learning for all children focused on most vulnerable children was conducted. The preliminary findings according to specific groups are:

Girls

The focus on education in emergencies for girls appears to prioritize support for gender violence and abuse, mental health, and no stated difference between--or efforts to distinguish--opportunities for boys and girls.

Indigenous

The focus on education in emergencies for those in indigenous communities appears to be with providing multilingual materials in indigenous languages, especially printed materials followed by in-person visits with teachers, and radio broadcasts. Those in indigenous communities that also are rural/remote have been some of the first to return to school already with governments believing it safer to do so in less populated rural/remote areas.

Migrants/Refugees

The focus on education in emergencies for migrants/refugees appears to prioritize health and safety first with educational materials also provided in person such as at temporary learning spaces, via radio, and online with equipment/access provided.

Without Internet

The focus on education in emergencies for those without Internet appears to require dissemination via multiple means (printed, in person, radio, TV, etc.) and efforts to expand infrastructure and work with telecommunications to provide free data.

Rural/Remote

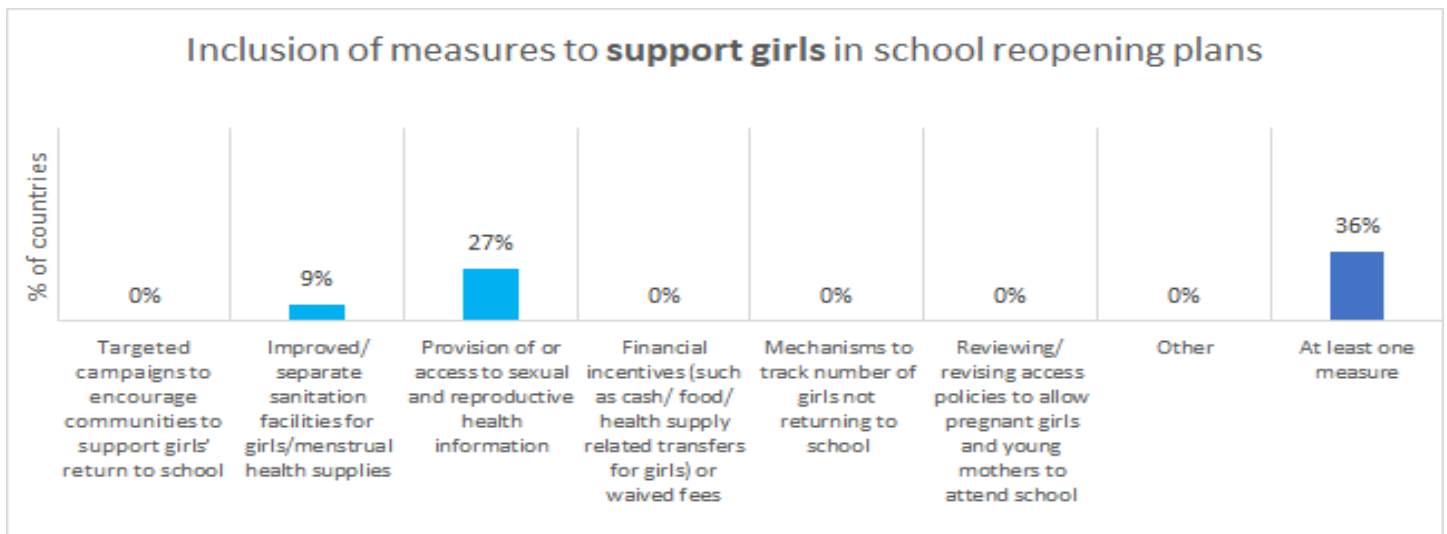
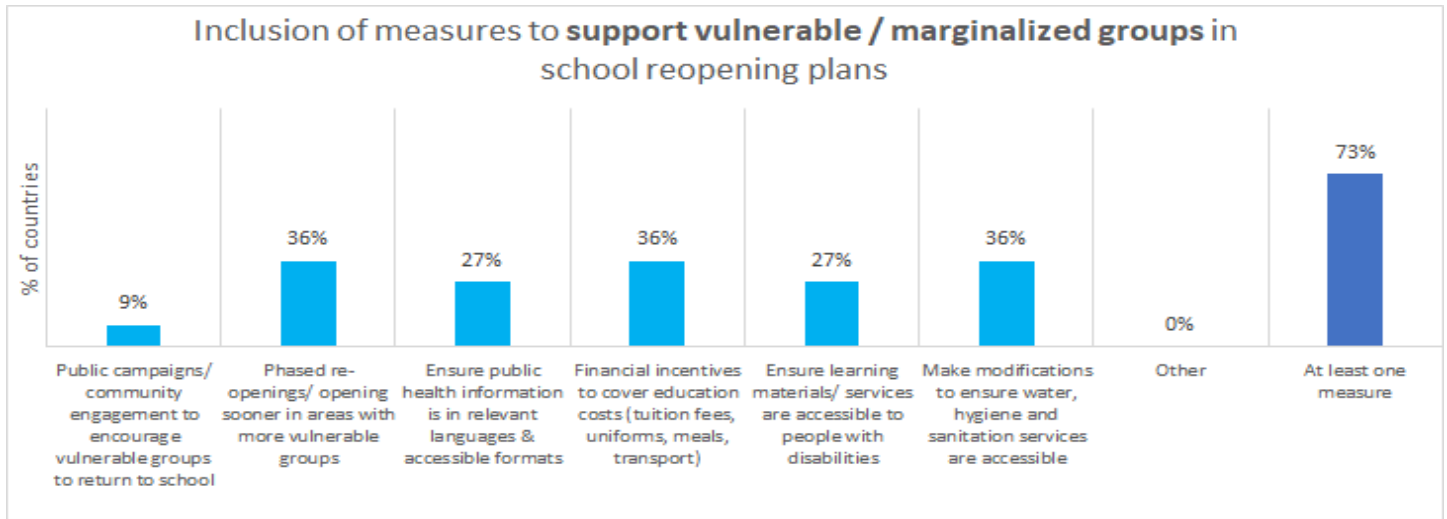
The focus on education in emergencies for those who are rural/remote appears to also require dissemination via multiple means (printed materials of many types, in person distribution of materials via representatives and social networks and as well as in-person education with teachers, local radio programming, TV, mobile phones, etc.) because one single method does not appear possible to reach all in need; additionally, sharing of resources appears necessary, such as students sharing a phone or a TV.

Special Needs

The focus on education in emergencies for those with special needs appears to be with parental support mostly through provision of printed guides and Internet resources for families to ensure continuity of learning.

National Responses to COVID-19

According to the Education Tracking Survey around the 73% of the countries have included at least one measure to support vulnerable groups as part of their reopening strategy:



2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN?

Information or data on how the most vulnerable children have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of access to education, learning and ECD services, with a focus on the poorest 20%:

UNICEF offices in several countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Panama, Paraguay, Ecuador, have conducted perception surveys of families with children and adolescents, through telephone or online. The results reveal large gaps in the access to electronic devices like computers or mobile phones, and to internet connections or other modalities of distance education. This gap in access is more noticeable in the poorest sectors and in rural areas. Even though over the past few months, the MOE with the support of National and international organizations have worked to improve access to internet

connections, distributed digital devices, and implemented educational programs through radio and television, there is limited or not available data on how these strategies are reaching the most vulnerable groups, there is very little disaggregated data on sex or age, and little information on what is the percentage of children who do not yet have access to an educational alternative.

In this section we will be able to see some results of the perception surveys in some countries and the information available in others:

ARGENTINA

More than 11 million students (from those around 1.8 million are preschool children) and about one million teachers (teaching and non-teaching staff) at the compulsory, initial, primary and secondary levels, suffered the impact of the closure measures (RA 2018, Ministry of Education). The inability to attend school in person is a problem that worsens the living conditions of children in the current context.

Even though the educational continuity is high at all levels of education, including the initial level, it must be considered that the lack of connectivity resources, among other deprivations, is likely to deepen pre-existing social inequalities:

At the initial level, one in two households has access to a computer with fixed Internet access. The remaining households are divided between those with computer and mobile data Internet access (8%), without computer and fixed Internet access (21%) and without computer and mobile data Internet access or no Internet access (20%).¹

On the other hand, in relation to daycare institutions that serve children from 0 to 2 years old, some of them, mainly private institutions are closing due to the lack income mostly because families cannot afford the payments. According to the private institutions association records approximately 160 daycares have closed their doors permanently.

BOLIVIA²

According to the national opinion survey on information and communication technologies (ICT) carried out by the Agency of Electronic Government and Information and Communication Technologies (AGETIC), only 42% of the population has a computer and 10% has permanent internet connection; on the other hand, the numbers are much lower if we talk about rural populations, where only 18% have a computer and 3% have permanent internet connection. Most of the access through cellular phones implies a restrictive connection and little affordability, reasons that can affect the low access of NNA to the virtual education modality.

In terms of access to electronic devices, the Bolivian State, as of 2014 began to provide computers to students in public educational units, increasing the number to 138,910, representing 4.39% of students in the country who have a device through which the NNA can access the Internet, but not necessarily a virtual education given the gaps in skills, socio-cultural, etc.

Regarding early childhood education, 318,885 children from 10,785 educational units with the initial level of schooling have been suspended from classroom activities throughout the country since 12 March³, and approximately 33,543 children under 4 years of age in 1389 children's centers run by municipal and departmental governments, which serve the most vulnerable populations, have had their services suspended throughout the country.⁴

¹Preliminary report of Household Survey on educational continuity within the framework of isolation by COVID-19, July. Ministry of Education of the Nation and UNICEF. Available [here](#)

² Data from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) State. State of Information and Communication Technologies State in the Plurinational State of Bolivia/ coordinated by the agency of the E-Government and Information and Communication Technologies (AGETIC). La Paz (Bolivia) 2018.

³ Data from the Ministry of Education, 2020.

⁴ Estimated date based on the children subscribed in the management 2019.

COSTA RICA

According to the available data, more than half of all children have been left without access to digital education, including the poorest. It is estimated that around 8,000 children are not in contact with the school after the mid-term vacation period.

The Ministry of Education is no longer providing the food service throughout their School Canteen Program, instead they are delivering a food package per student each month. So far, four distributions have been made, and logistics, transportation and delivery have been organized throughout the country.

The contact with the early childhood children is developed in a similar way to the older children, mainly throughout online platforms, or distribution of printed materials or digital files (USB).

The Education and Nutrition Centers and the Children's Centers for Integrated Care for children under 12 years



UNICEF/EI Salvador/2020/Leiva

old are working at half capacity, to support those mothers and fathers who must go to work. These centers distribute food and milk packages to take home and have also delivered packages containing early stimulation resources and games to mothers of the nearest communities.

CUBA

Coverage of educational services in the country is universal and public, including care for children with disabilities and modalities for early childhood care. So far, there are no results or information on studies of the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable children, nor are there any studies focusing on the poorest 20 per cent.

MEXICO

There are two early childhood education services for the most vulnerable populations: community education provided by the National Council for the Promotion of Education in rural areas with high and very high levels of marginalization, and home visits by the Ministry of Public Education in urban areas with high and very high levels of marginalization. Both services continued their early education sessions by making telephone calls and providing families with printed material on activities to be carried out at home. In the case of preschool education, workbooks were produced and distributed to families in rural areas to ensure continuity in education.

Prior to the pandemic, 41.8% of children under 5 years of age in the lowest income quintile in Mexico did not attend an early education program and for reasons of COVID19, it is estimated that this gap has not been reduced because services have not been opened.

According to a survey of a sample of households conducted by the Ibero-American University and UNICEF in May 2020, only 60% of households with children indicate that they have accessed the Ministry of Education's "Learn at Home" offer. Of the households at the lowest socio-economic level that participated in the survey, 54% indicate that children and adolescents have used distance education, especially television programming. 21.4% of households with the lowest socio-economic level that participated in the survey indicated that they were not satisfied with the distance education offer. Among the obstacles, it was mentioned the lack of access to the internet and/or computer, lack of knowledge to accompany learning, and the lack of textbooks and teaching materials.

PANAMA

The Government of Panama does not have disaggregated data on access to education by quintiles during the pandemic. However, we have information on the total student population (850,000 approximately) and the total number of students reached.

The response to the educational emergency has been divided into two phases. In phase 1, about 200,000 students were reached, and the last preliminary report on phase 2, MEDUCA indicated that it had reached about 350,000 students.

UNICEF Panama office conducted a nationwide telephone survey of households during May 26 and June 9 that achieved nationwide representation with a margin of error of 3.1%. The results were presented to the government and in a press conference and can be accessed [here](#).

The survey sought to identify the situation of families with children and adolescents in five areas, within which education is found, and thus generate evidence of the deprivation of children and adolescents. The survey highlights that:

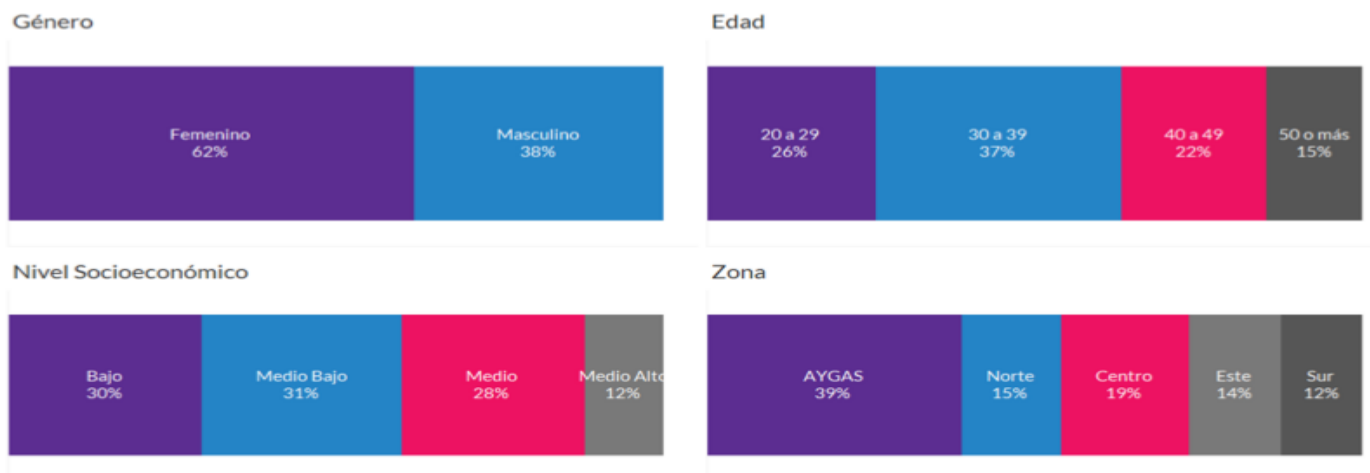
- The average family has 2 minor children, with different age ranges.
- 53% of the total sample said they had received some form of distance education during the pandemic. This percentage varies between private versus official students.
- In 75% of the cases it is the mother who supports the distance education process.
- In terms of the channels used, in official education one has access to public media such as radio and television compared to private education, which has more access to virtual platforms with interaction with teachers.
- Of the total sample, 206 households needed health services, of which 7% were pregnant women and 26% were children.

The survey did not consider the population of the Regions and Darien, due to limited telephone connectivity or accessibility.

PARAGUAY

UNICEF, with financial support from USAID, conducted a [perception survey](#) in April and May with the aim of understanding the impact of the coronavirus on Paraguayan families who have children or adolescents in their care.

- Stratified sample of 1049 households with children and adolescents nationwide.
- Survey method: 60% via the Web, 40% via telephone.



According to the perception survey, these data stand out in terms of education and continuity of learning:

- 70% of respondents revealed that their children have homework or school activities every day.
- It takes the children an average of almost two hours to complete their homework.
- 50% of children take between one and two hours per day to complete homework, 25% take a little more than two hours to four hours.

Reaching the Most Vulnerable Children

- 52% of children and teenagers receive classroom videos via WhatsApp or email.
- 45% of parents think that virtual or distance learning classes are good and serve to keep kids active, however, 32% of parents think it will be a lost year.
- In 44% of the cases, the compliance support is basically on the mothers, in 33% on both parents, and only 11% on the fathers.

PERU

Data on access to distance education shows that, in a nationally representative survey, coverage reaches 95% of students, however, reports from our priority regions (two in the Amazon, one in the sierra and the poor urban area in northern Lima) show figures with much lower coverage, especially in indigenous and scattered rural areas. Indigenous populations are the most affected. Some early childhood care services have been restarted but with very limited outreach, primary health services (including growth and development support programmes) are operating with severe limitations.

SURINAME

The 20% poorest households are predominantly situated in the rural interior (84.9%), followed by the rural coastal (31.5%) and urban areas (9.4%) (MICS2018).

The districts Brokopondo and Sipaliwini making up 84.9% of the cluster of 20% poorest household are home to 11,500 students enrolled (2019-2020) in pre-primary and lower secondary. In Brokopondo there is a moderate reach of children with TV broadcasts of distance learning material, however in Sipaliwini there are isolated interior communities (Kwamalasamutu, Coeroeni, Amatopo, Alalapadu and the village Sipaliwini) that do not have access to internet, radio and / or TV broadcasting and are most difficult to reach with by the MoE regarding e-learning. ECD services through from a health sector perspective are provided by the Medical Mission, specialized in primary health care in the interior.

VENEZUELA

At the end of June, a national congress was held where more than 25 different community educational strategies were identified, contextualized and territorialized. In Venezuela, the distance education strategy does not focus on attention mediated by technologies (virtual classrooms, digital platforms, Web resources), but on community attention, with grassroots community organizations and a close school-family-community relationship, which has enabled children to be cared for in disadvantaged contexts.

There is no precise data from the Ministry of Education on the impact of this distance school period during the pandemic. However, "Fe y Alegría", an organization that attends subsidized schools in vulnerable sectors of the country reported that they managed to serve 80% of the students with multiple distance teaching strategies, leaving 20% without attention. In the month of August, the Ministry of Education will apply an evaluation survey in the 24 states of the country to assess the results of the remote plan "Every Family a School". Likewise, they have organized technical groups of curricular evaluation by educational levels, for the adaptation of a pedagogical plan at a distance for the next school year that will begin in September.

3. WHAT ARE THE GOVERNMENTS DOING?

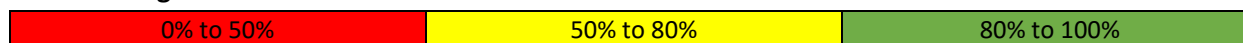
Government actions to support access to education, learning and ECD services of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children:

National governments have done considerable efforts to reach the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and adolescents through blended models, combining internet/distance learning with more traditional methods such as television, radio and printed material brought to families. Most educational and ECD services are being digitized or adapted to these new modalities of distance learning, however as the table below shows, there are still large gaps regarding the access to internet, mobile connections, social media platforms, TV, radio and podcasts modes.

Country	Internet penetration %	Social media penetration %	Mobile connections (% of total population)	MoE online platform	Online platform	Offline platform
Argentina	78%	76%	129%	Yes	Website	Radio, TV
Belize	61%	61%	102%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Bolivia	65%	65%	99%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Brazil	71%	66%	97%	Yes		Podcasts, TV, Radio
Chile	82%	79%	138%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colombia	69%	69%	119%	Yes	Website	
Costa Rica	74%	73%	178%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	63%	55%	51%	Yes		Radio TV
Dominican Republic	75%	59%	80%	Yes	Website	
Anguilla	82%	74%	173%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Antigua & Barbuda	76%	66%	195%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Barbados	82%	66%	117%	N/A	N/A	N/A
British Virgin Islands	83%	83%	178%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dominica	70%	54%	117%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grenada	63%	63%	114%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Montserrat	60%	60%	183%	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Kitts and Nevis	81%	72%	144%	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	60%	60%	128%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trinidad y Tobago	77%	62%	136%	Yes	Website	
Turks and Caicos	81%	81%	114%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ecuador	69%	69%	89%	Yes	Website	
El Salvador	59%	59%	145%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Guatemala	65%	45%	119%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Guyana	55%	55%	82%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Haiti	33%	18%	63%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Honduras	42%	42%	83%	Yes		TV
Jamaica	55%	44%	111%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mexico	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nicaragua	47%	47%	151%	Yes	Website	
Panama	62%	56%	114%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Paraguay	65%	56%	102%	Yes	Website	
Peru	73%	73%	116%	Yes	Website	TV, Radio
Suriname	62%	62%	174%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Uruguay	78%	78%	156%	Yes	Website	
Venezuela	72%	42%	81%	Yes		TV, Radio

Source: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020>

Color Coding:



Below you find a few examples from National Governments in LAC:

ARGENTINA

The Ministry of Education has implemented a series of strategies to provide educational content and resources to the educational community, as well as training for teachers adapted to each compulsory level (pre-school, primary and secondary). “Seguimos Educando”: A digital platform containing digital resources and activities organized by education levels and designed to be used during the quarantine. This platform is also used to reach the most vulnerable populations, with little or no access to connectivity and ICT devices that enable access to virtual platforms and resources, the following strategies have been developed:

Two booklets with educational content have been printed and distributed: one for children from 0 to 3-year-old and another for children from 4 to 5 years old. A Digital library has been established with a repository of textbooks, teaching guides (books, audios, videos and interactive material), children's and young people's literature, Argentinean and Latin American literature and world classics.

The National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family of the Ministry of Social Development has prepared a guide with recommendations, [ideas and resources](#) for adults to share with girls and boys at home.

BELIZE

MoE in Belize is using learning platforms to provide continuing education to children in Belize. Printed lessons via Special Edition Newsprint to be published every two weeks students from primary school to secondary schools. Radio broadcasted lessons utilizing FM Radio Stations (Monday to Friday). Television broadcasted, 2- 3 times per week to provide support for psychosocial and life skills to children and parents. Internet based via MoE website -lessons posted daily for children from the class of standard one to six.

BOLIVIA

The Ministry of Education promoted the National Pact for Educational Transformation, a framework of teacher trainings in tools for virtual education, signed with CISCO, Microsoft, Google Educators Group and TIGO. Under this framework, and jointly with the enterprise ENTEL, an [education and entertaining platform](#) was launched, mainly targeting secondary students. The Supreme Decree 4260 on education modalities during COVID-19 was issued.

It highlights the onsite, virtual, blended and distant (radio and TV) modalities delegating to educational institutions the adjustment of their curricular designs. In the case of non-school early education (0-4 years), early childhood programmes run by departmental and municipal governments have limited interventions with experiences (such as SEDEGES Cochabamba, SEDEGES La Paz, GAM El Alto, GAM Independencia) that are adapting their interventions to some of the modalities.

CHILE

MoE has launched the remote learning platform “Aprendo en Línea” to support continuity of the educational processes. A free downloadable software “Learning to read with Bartolo” was available to support the learning of reading for students from 1st to 3rd grade.

In addition, TVChannel #TVEducaChile, transmits cultural and curricular entertainment of the courses from 1 to 4 basic. MoE has also released graphic and audiovisual resources for socio-emotional support for teachers, students and families. Furthermore, curricular prioritization for all educational levels in response to the educational needs.

COSTA RICA

The Education and Nutrition Centers and the Children's Centers for Integrated Care are government organizations. Through these organizations, the government seeks to maintain care as long as the health situation allows. The same applies to measures taken by the Ministry of Public Education as a state institution.

CUBA

Within the framework of distance education programming, an educational space was created through television with a national scope dedicated to families and early childhood, to achieve the maximum possible development of each child. Topics covered include health, nutrition, hygiene and the different areas of development, psycho-emotional support, learning from home, learning for children with disabilities, among others. At this time, all the provinces of the country, as the phase progressed, restarted the care of children in the educational centers dedicated to early childhood care.



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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Ministry of Education has developed a website for school continuity with educational guides and materials for all levels, including disabilities, and has supported food distribution at national level (bread, milk, HEBs to families with enrolled children).

ECUADOR

The Ministry of Education with the support of UNICEF is working to ensure that more children and adolescents have access to quality educational content through radio and television and supporting pedagogical mentors and teachers from the remedial program in the implementation of distance education. The Ministry of Education together with the education authorities presented the Educational Plan "Aprendemos Juntos en casa", which will be implemented in the Costa-Galapagos regions for the school year 2020-2021.

EL SALVADOR

The government aims to reach the most excluded populations in circumstances of confinement, social distancing and school closure through multimodal learning paths that prioritize television and radio, including printed material that is brought to families. Most educational processes are being digitized or adapted to these new modalities of distance learning. Among these, ECD "Aprendamos en Casa" (Let's Learn at Home) educational television slot provides coverage to all children in remote places without Internet connectivity. Another initiative is the early childhood care strategy on which will be applied the Child Development Assessment (CDA) to evaluate development indicators and subsequently define educational intervention. The Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) implements through multimodal distance learning the ICDP's "I am also a Person" methodology, aimed at improving parenting practices in families with early childhood children.

The Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF, is adapting the "Community Music Leadership" methodology, designed by the organization Musicians Without Borders, to address through music the learning of skills for peaceful coexistence, gender equality and inclusion, among others. This methodology is for all levels of education from early childhood.

GUATEMALA

The country has an early childhood programme that covers only 5 of 22 departments, indigenous children with populations in vulnerable situations, with available infographic material, tutorials and gifs to support the volunteer educators. For children with disabilities, Guatemala has produced all the videos with sign language and printed material in Braille. To support migrant population, the *Mineduc digital* and the *Alternative Education Programme*, where students can rejoin the education system at any time. Guatemala also stands out for progressive reopening of schools in rural/remote areas with governments believing it safer to do so in less populated areas.

MEXICO

The Ministry of Public Education of Mexico provides continuity to the educational offer through its strategy "Learn at Home" and "Fun Summer" that was implemented for the levels of initial education, pre-school, primary, secondary, special education and adult education through adapted content available on a digital platform, educational programs on television and radio and the distribution of free textbooks. These spaces have been translated into sign language. The SEP also reports on the broadcasting of educational radio programmes in 15 indigenous languages, to reach indigenous populations.

In the case of households that lack connectivity or television, workbooks with exercises to be done at home have been handed out in physical form for initial and preschool education, and educational agents have followed up by telephone calls. No action has been taken by the State to assist the migrant population or those with disabilities, except for those with hearing disabilities.

NICARAGUA

MoE has been implementing Distance education modalities in the field, both at primary and secondary level, which are becoming more important in the current context. These modalities are aimed at nearly 60,000 children and adolescents in rural communities who work in the countryside, in domestic work or in maquilas and cannot attend regular school.

PANAMA

In Panama some of the Government strategies to reach the most vulnerable groups are implemented by different Ministries at national level, highlighting:

Ministry of Social Development – MIDES: Delivery of the "Panamá Solidario" voucher that includes families with children and focuses on poor populations. The platform "Tu CAIPI en Casa" is a virtual library with the purpose of sharing parenting guidelines, songs, stories and games that, they will be able to perform from their homes, thus promoting early childhood development in Panama.

Ministry of Education: Design and implementation of the strategy "The Star of Education does not stop". This strategy contemplates 3 phases: i) the planning and adaptation of the educational system, together with an offer of radio and television contents to maintain the educational routine in an autonomous way; ii) the restart of the distance school year - July 20 to December 31, 2020 and iii) the return to schools - according to health conditions and guidelines. The MoE has prioritized the curriculum and made available to parents and students' various educational resources through different media such as TV, radio and web. A guide has been designed for parents, which they plan to distribute to all preschool students. See more details [here](#).

PARAGUAY

The Ministry has developed the [Education Plan in Times of a Pandemic](#), which outlines the strategies to be implemented to continue distance learning: virtual and non-virtual modes. The Ministry has negotiated free navigation on the MoE

pages with Internet and telephone providers. The non-virtual mode consists of the use of mass media such as radio and TV and the delivery of printed materials for children and adolescents who do not have access to the Internet. There is a space on TV for the transmission of television classes. However, for the moment, the reach of materials and the continuity of learning for children who do not have access to the Internet is unknown.

The main means of communication between students and teachers is WhatsApp. However, there is much heterogeneity at the national level. For example, indigenous communities have different mechanisms to reach out to students: some teach virtually, others choose a day to hand in homework, and others go to their students' homes.

PERU

The Peruvian state is developing a strategy of expansion of coverage based on more than one million tablets for dispersed rural and indigenous school populations. The implementation process of this strategy is more than two months behind schedule currently. MINEDU is developing a multi-channel pedagogical strategy with a special focus on rural and indigenous populations, which includes tablets but also actions with sub-national governments to strengthen support for principals and teachers.

SURINAME

MoE's priority is to design a website/platform to launch the learning materials digitally and develop TV productions for TV channels. Efforts will be made to make the learning materials accessible for children without internet access and inclusive with the provision of sign language. For the families who do not have access to television or internet, the MoE will provide hard copy packages. The MoE has received donations of tablets, which will be utilized to support learning of children in the hardest to reach areas including maroon and indigenous communities.

URUGUAY

On June 15 elementary and middle schools reopened in the country, except for Montevideo, and on June 29 schools reopened in Montevideo too. Furthermore, the national government has designed a protocol for the schools reopening process and elaborated guidelines for teachers during the reopening process. It has also elaborated guidelines for distance learning. Learning support via Ceibal at Home (<https://oecdeditoday.com/wpcontent/>) continues as well as the TV programming. The MoE (ANEP) has also developed a key document on the challenges of distance education, including strategies and tools for teachers and education communities.

VENEZUELA

Since July and with the start of the vacation period, the Ministry of Education launched the plan "Every family a school on Vacation" with a proposal of daily activities to promote recreation, learning on key issues and socio-emotional care during the two and a half months of the vacation period. This aims to maintain attention and the learning of children and adolescents in the context of confinement. This plan is developed multiplatform on national TV, radios and community recreational promoters.

The daily programming of the Plan Every Family a School, displays specific sections for initial education (early childhood children) and for special education (children with disabilities), with proposals for activities for these populations with a focus on inclusion, accessibility, continuation and permanence of children with disabilities, with intersectoriality for care from other available services.

4. HOW IS UNICEF SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT EFFORTS?

UNICEF supports access to education, learning and ECD services of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children:

Complementing national efforts, UNICEF COs have provided constant technical assistance and capacity building to MoEs in the implementation of their efforts to reach the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and adolescents. UNICEF COs have also provided financial and technical assistance for the development of educational, MHPSS and communication materials. Below you may find excellent examples of UNICEF Support to access to education and ECD services:



UNICEF/UNI328556/Volpe

ARGENTINA

UNICEF is part of the working commissions for the reopening of schools and preschool services and is also supporting the preparation of protocols for the authorities of early childhood institutions. In relation to early childhood spaces outside the education system, UNICEF is focusing on supporting the most excluded children by working with 3 provinces (Salta, Entre Ríos and Mendoza) in the framework of the Joint SDG Fund Programme, supporting the development of a comprehensive Provincial Early Childhood Strategy, the development and implementation of early childhood training, and the development of protocols for the reopening of early childhood spaces in coordination with the education departments and using the document prepared by LACRO as one of the inputs.

In Salta, UNICEF is systematizing the experience of early childhood spaces adapted to rural and indigenous contexts to be replicated in other areas facing similar challenges. In addition, the Crianza Sin Violencia Programme is being adapted from an intercultural perspective to rural contexts and the indigenous population.

BELIZE

UNICEF is supporting the development of guidance and content for parents and caregivers to assist children including psycho-social support and distance learning for most vulnerable children: migrants, refugees, children with disabilities, children out-of-school, and indigenous children, including support to ongoing school-feeding.

UNICEF CO is further supporting the Ministry of Education with 1,200 school packages of hygiene/sanitation supplies for handwashing and the prevention of COVID-19, to reach approximately 50,000 school children and 2400 classrooms in the most vulnerable communities.

BOLIVIA

UNICEF Bolivia is providing technical assistance to departmental and municipal governments for implementation in various modalities of early childhood care, such as the strategy of phone calls to families on play activities, messaging strategy by WhatsApp on child development issues, home visits to the most vulnerable families and delivery of primers, development of radio programmes and dissemination of messages on local radio stations.

The office is also developing virtual sessions open to the families of younger children with orientations to face the quarantine and continue learning at home.

UNICEF is also developing and disseminating materials in various formats: videos, cribs, booklets with care recommendations and home play, and producing materials and virtual sessions to support families with children with disabilities in coordination with the National Council of Persons with Disabilities (CONALPEDIS).

In the case of most vulnerable children in Primary and Secondary Education, UNICEF is supporting radio programmes that will broadcast radio classes for girls and boys at the primary level of the regular education subsystem in isolated municipalities with Indigenous Autonomy, among others. The same initiative will train teachers in the methodology of distance and radio education.

BRASIL

Inclusion - UNICEF is disseminating to municipalities contents produced in partnership with Sesame Street on inclusion of children with disability. You can see the material [here](#).

Radio Super Panas – Educational audio contents, produced in three languages (Portuguese, Spanish and Warao) focused on migrant and refugee children and adolescents, for the dissemination on local AM/FM radios of BoaVista, Manaus and Belém, cities with high presence of Venezuelan migrants.

COLOMBIA

UNICEF Colombia has reached 12,000 children with the home learning strategy La Aldea in la Guajira, Norte de Santander and Barranquilla. UNICEF Colombia, as leader of the EiE cluster, has aligned the humanitarian response with the MoE and the local Secretariats, and has supported the Education Needs Assessment done by the Education Secretariats in Norte de Santander and Nariño. Additionally, as a joint action between IRC, NRC and UNICEF, pedagogical material was delivered for the education continuity of 195 children (pendulares) living in Venezuela but studying in Colombia. The MoE of Colombia launched a series of guidelines and protocols for the partial reopening of schools as of August 1st, 2020.

COSTA RICA

UNICEF has integrated a work area of Emergency Attention by COVID-19 into the Work Plan with the Ministry of Education for \$180,000, which includes the development of "Autonomous Learning Guides" for remote education; assessment and attention to the impact on students of COVID-19; support to the MEP in developing a strategy for returning to the educational process at the working tables; audiovisual and written systematization of good practices on educational innovations, access to services and prevention of educational exclusion and the development of a social communication campaign to promote the safe return to the educational process and hygiene measures.

Furthermore, UNICEF is in the process of implementing \$800,000 of USAID funds under the Early Childhood and Education Program to be executed in two areas: i) Provision of critical hygiene or other supplies, and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and WASH at COVID-19.

CUBA

UNICEF Cuba is providing support on psychosocial care for vulnerable communities, educational environments dedicated to early childhood and groups with a gender perspective and in support of inclusive education. Priority is given to working with families of children with disabilities and autism and people in multi-risk areas.

Among the actions carried out, there are two Facebook Live sessions with specialists of more than 20 years of experience in the care of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities and autism. Both sessions in the first two days counted with more than 1,300 reproductions each one and more than 5,000 people reached, a great number considering that it is a totally organic reach and it is focused on specific communities.

The aforementioned was reinforced by the "Show them the way. Guide to Support during COVID-19 times". It has explanations, games and rhymes with pictograms. Also, a psychosocial care group for families and teachers of children

with autism has been held for a month now. It is held twice a week, with specialists who provide tools and consultancy for emotional support, continuity of studies at home, and preparation for the post-Covid-19 stage and the reopening of schools.

Resources focused on the most vulnerable children:

- [Facebook Live on psychosocial care for families of children and adolescents with autism.](#)
- [Facebook Live on psychosocial care for families of children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities.](#)

ECA

UNICEF provided support to Ministry of Education St. Lucia for provision of distant learning for 13,000 primary school children through TV and Radio programmes. UNICEF ECA provided 660 digital devices for the most vulnerable children with devices to ensure their access to online education in the 6 island countries which include 43 in Anguilla, 120 in Barbados, 100 in Dominica, 96 in St. Lucia, 50 in Tobago, 200 in Turks and Caicos and 51 in Virgin Islands. In Trinidad, more than 600 migrant children have been provided with online distant education and during the month of May additional 277 migrant children received tablets and 240 received student kits. Sixteen Facilitators have been assigned to work directly with the Notes Master team to complete outstanding online content and to receive targeted technical support with the platform to better assist migrant children in accessing on-line education

ECUADOR:

As of June 2020, UNICEF continues supporting the MO with their multiplatform learning included support to educational television, education programs in community radios, distribution of printed material in Spanish and indigenous languages, distribution of mobile equipment and connectivity to education staff, pedagogical and psychosocial orientation and support to teachers and student councilors.

30-minute educational programs are produced and transmitted with UNICEF's support daily in 25 community radios reaching 2.473.177 listeners. The capacities of community radios in production of educational programs are being strengthened simultaneously as most of them did not have experience or capacities in this area. Both the productions as the training process are being published through national media to raise awareness of the importance and the role of community radios in this emergency.

UNICEF continued distribution of educational materials and hygiene kits to students in rural and hard to reach communities of the Northern Border, accompany teachers to conduct levelling and adapt education to multi-grade school reality in the emergency context. Intercultural bilingual material was printed for 240,000 indigenous students and distributed through the Ministry of Education to the territories.

EL SALVADOR

UNICEF El Salvador has provided technical assistance for the design and capacity building in the EDI test, which will be implemented by the Ministry of Education in coordination with the Office of the First Lady, is being supported financially and technically by UNICEF.

Technical and financial support to the Salvadoran Institute for the Integral Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) to digitize the methodology "I am also a Person" referred to above, as well as to develop applications that allow families to work with other devices such as telephones, television, social networks, etc.

Technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education in adapting the previously mentioned methodology on "Community Music Leadership", designed by the organization Musicians Without Borders, to multimodal learning (digital media, television, radio, social networks, among others). Likewise, technical and financial support is being provided for the design of the virtual diploma course on this methodology aimed at teacher training.

GUATEMALA

Development of educational material, training of community managers who make home visits, radio programmes, tutorials and training of community educators.

GUYANA

Utilizing the gazetted COVID-19 Special Measures for the return to school, schools across Guyana witnessed a 95% attendance at the National Grade 6 Assessment thus giving a good indicator and encouragement for sustained preparation and communication to parents, teachers and students for active participation. In keeping with the agreed MOE-UNICEF-GPE Accelerated Fund Programme UNICEF handed over to the MoE, 1,944 face shields for use by teachers and have released USD 1.8 million USD for hybrid approach on and offline platforms and print based and manipulatives targeting the most marginalized in the hinterland, riverine areas.

HAITI

The CO supported the MoE in the development of the GPE \$ 10 million funding proposal as Grant Agent and has also provided technological devices such as laptops, WIFI modems, smartphones, printers etc. to MoE's personnel to facilitate working from home modalities during confinement period. In addition, UNICEF is working with a local newspaper to produce a children's magazine to give more than 25,000 children access to free reading and learning materials for 6 months and is also working with the MoE to set-up and support a working group for the development of home learning paper-based materials for children (Preschool and basic Education levels).

HONDURAS

UNICEF CO continues providing TA to SEDUC communication strategy; has reviewed textbooks that will be printed soon, in 4 different languages to students that have not yet been reached by internet or TV activities. 120 teachers of prioritized municipalities are being trained in how to include in the curriculum and daily plans, contents and activities of WASH resilient to climate change with gender approach (first phase)

JAMAICA

The Jamaica Country Office/MOEYI COVID-19 Distance Learning poll has closed, and results can be found at <https://jamaica.ureport.in/opinion/1762/>. The UNICEF JCO handed over 210 tablets for public special needs school students on July 16 as well as 50 phones for use island-wide in a teletherapy referral partnership with the Ministry of Health and Wellness. 300 additional play and learn kits were also distributed to children under 6 in a former quarantined zone bringing to 1100 the total number of ECD play and learn kits distributed island-wide through a partnership between the UNICEF JCO, the Early Childhood Commission and the humanitarian NGO *Food for the Poor* since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MEXICO

Support was provided to the Ministry of Public Education with the contents of the educational offer for preschool education, disseminated on the "Aprende en Casa" digital platform and with its television broadcast through a series of videos produced in partnership with Sesame Workshop. Work is also under way on a workbook for preschool children to be distributed in shelters for the migrant population, also with the translation of content on the digital platform into Mexican Sign Language, and messages on the right to education and educational continuity have been translated into 20 indigenous languages and broadcasted on community radio with CIESAS.

NICARAGUA

UNICEF is supporting modalities of distance education with the printing of textbooks so that children and adolescents can self-guide their learning at home, while they wait to meet on Saturdays as a school group; with teacher training to develop new skills; and with capacity building for the accompaniment and technical support of municipal and departmental education bodies.

Technical and financial support is being provided to the MoE Inclusive Special Education Directorate to strengthen teachers' capacities to work with families who have children with disabilities aged 0 to 3. Further, a teacher's guide and a parent's handbook on early childhood development, disabilities or developmental disorders has been developed. Resources have been allocated for the provision of hygiene kits to special education schools, and for the printing of study guides for nearly 3,000 children and people with disabilities. UNICEF has initiated a process for technical assistance to MoE so that the institution will have a protocol for the care of migrant children and adolescents and migrant parents or caregivers.

PANAMA

UNICEF Panama has worked partnership with the private sector and the Ministry of Education to carry out different initiatives:

- Communication campaign aimed at parents and caregivers through TV, radio and social networks to promote routine, play, emotion management, prevention of COVID-19, etc.
- Provision of audiovisual educational materials distributed through TV, radio and networks.
- Supply of printed family and coloring guides.
- Advocate for the inclusion of interculturality in the response, allowing preschool and primary school levels to have materials translated into their languages.

Further, Panama will accompany the Ministry of Social Development in the design of strategies that will allow the effective accompaniment of families with children under 4 years old enrolled in child development centers and will provide technical support in the formulation of interventions to reach families with children under 4 who are part of the Plan Colmena.

PARAGUAY

UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Culture for the continuation of learning and early childhood stimulation and development. In the area of early childhood, a package of content was developed with the Alda Foundation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Adolescents to be disseminated through social networks and WhatsApp.

For populations that do not have access to the Internet, UNICEF is supporting the non-virtual modality by developing school support podcasts to be broadcasted on national and community radio stations.

Two content packages are being developed with MoE:

- 1) Ñahendumi (Let's listen/ "Escuchemos" in guarani) are audios that have an Interdisciplinary and Communicative focus for the different levels: Early Education, Basic School Education, Indigenous School Education.
- 2) Tikichuela: math audios for preschool and first grades. These audios must be accompanied by printed materials, for which UNICEF will be supporting the MEC in their distribution in areas where there is no Internet access.

PERU

UNICEF is technically assisting MINEDU in the multi-channel educational strategy with a special focus on rural and indigenous populations, facilitating consultation between regional and local governments in the regions of Ucayali, Loreto and Huancavelica. The distribution of 10,400 educational kits is being implemented, which include, in addition to

educational and hygiene materials, data chips to reinforce connectivity. A plan for active search and prevention of secondary school dropouts has been launched in 100 schools to model a scalable response. Finally, UNICEF with WB, IDB and UNESCO have prepared the strategic plan for reopening schools for MINEDU which has a strong pro-equity emphasis.

SURINAME

UNICEF is supporting the MoE by improving access to distance learning content through a TV channel specialized in reaching the interior. With UNICEF support, hygiene items will be distributed to schools in ten districts, targeting approximately 143.393 children in 574 schools and 10.433 teaching staff. The CO will also support the assessment of WASH gaps in schools focused on water availability, hand washing facilities and hygiene aspects. This support will consider those most marginalized.

For the families who do not have access to television or the internet, UNICEF also supports the MoE to provide hard copy packages. UNICEF will support MoE with the establishment of the UNICEF Learning Passport learning platform, including the online, offline and mobile options to also reach those 20% most excluded children.

In addition, UNICEF is supporting the establishment of 3 pilot decentralized school-cluster-based student care teams (including e.g. remedial, diagnostic, socio-psychological, speech therapy, etc.) and through a partnership with a CSO specialized in early learning education for children 2.5-4 years, UNICEF is supporting the development of distance learning content for 3-year old's and will further engage in creating opportunities to also reach the most disadvantaged 3-year old's in Brokopodo and Sipaliwini.

URUGUAY

UNICEF Uruguay is supporting the National TV program organized by the Plan CEIBAL and the National Administration of Public Education (ANEP) to promote educational continuity: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA_SigCHKBoGrYroblUMX58lxtWcpl6j. In collaboration with the National Administration of Public Education (ANEP), the CO is also developing a scholarship program to promote the return to schools among vulnerable adolescents affected by the economic crisis during the COVID-19 outbreak.

VENEZUELA

UNICEF has initiated work with "Fe y Alegría", focused on the educational use of radio to promote educational programs and key messages with focus on psychosocial support, early childhood, prevention and protection practices, and promotion of school continuity from home. Fe y Alegría has a network of radio stations nationwide, in addition to alliances with community radio stations, for the dissemination of these educational programs and radio stations. In relation to indigenous communities, UNICEF is advocating with the MoE for the creation of a technical panel to respond to the educational approach of the indigenous population during the COVID-19 emergency, from strategies supported by community radio and modular radio-frequency, from knowledge and Inter-communicational structure of indigenous communities.

5. WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

Reach of vulnerable children in terms of access to different types of distance/alternative education and ECD services:

Thanks to a mix of distance/alternative education and ECD services, supported by UNICEF technical and financial support many vulnerable children have been reached with education services. However, the actual reach is very hard to measure access to early childhood care and education services. Average range between 40 to 70% of targeted populations as per CO examples below.

ARGENTINA

The Ministry of Education has developed with the support of UNICEF the household survey of the National Learning Continuity Evaluation program, developed in June ([Households survey on children's education Report - Spanish](#)) to have information about how many children were reached by the strategies developed

Data indicates that 68% most vulnerable children and adolescents were supported by the printed booklets and 87% of children and adolescents were supported with TV contents with school activities and 65% with radio educative contents. Further, the survey shows that the national program "*Seguimos Educando*" reaches effectively to the most vulnerable children and adolescents. In particular, the printed booklets (conceived particularly for those households with difficulties in accessing connectivity and in more isolated contexts) were used by 28% of all households with students in compulsory education, clearly focusing on the most socioeconomically segments affected: 41% of highly vulnerable households, 44% children with no ICT resources, and 45% households with students who attend public schools. If considered, use rate among households that received these printed materials, the utilization percentage reaches 85%.

BOLIVIA

In the case of early childhood care, through the establishment of various modalities (radio, TV, telephone, home visits, distribution of printed matter) and in coordination with local governments, the aim is to reach the most vulnerable population, which is mainly found in dispersed rural areas, indigenous populations, shelters, and children with disabilities.

CUBA

As a result of free and universal access to education services in the country, 100% of children enrolled in the different education programmes have access to the different types of distance education, including early childhood care.

During the period of school confinement and closure, 444 early childhood care centers throughout the country continued to provide services for children of working mothers in the health and other essential sectors; and wage guarantees were implemented for mothers left at home to care for children and to facilitate distance education activities.

EL SALVADOR

The Ministry of Education is using different multimodal learning strategies to ensure that the most vulnerable children, from remote areas and without connectivity, can access education. Among these strategies are the educational strip on television and they are also broadcasting on radio, social networks; also printing guides with pedagogical guidelines for population without connectivity. Quantitative information on the scope of these strategies is not available.

GUATEMALA

There is no exact measurement, there are different alternatives: printed material, radio programming, tutorials.

NICARAGUA

It is known that at least 40% of preschool children are not attending school for various reasons: lack of schools and teachers, low demand for the service, especially in rural areas. In order to bring preschool services to the most vulnerable groups, MINED has promoted for years the "Community Preschools" modality, which works with the collaboration of the community, and tangential support from the government in terms of teacher training and teacher travel expenses. This modality supports more than 60% of the children in school.

PANAMA

The country resumed its school year on 20 July on distance mode, so there is no data available at this stage to determine the level of exclusion. From the Panama office, we are evaluating alternatives for measuring access to early childhood care services, including education for the coming months, which will generate evidence and guide our advocacy.

SURINAME

National average of the reach through TV is 70%.

VENEZUELA

127,002 children from vulnerable contexts have been reached, 15% being boys and girls between 0 and 6 years of age, who in turn have benefited from psychoeducational support strategies and delivery of school materials. Through the school feeding programs with implementing partners, UNICEF Venezuela has reached 56,961 children, 35% of whom are children under 6 years of age.

Learning outcomes: What are vulnerable children learning through the provision of different distance/alternative education modalities.

There is no information available on how children are learning through distance education modalities, but these are some of the actions that are being implemented or will be implemented in the LAC countries to improve the availability of data and information on learning outcomes.

ARGENTINA

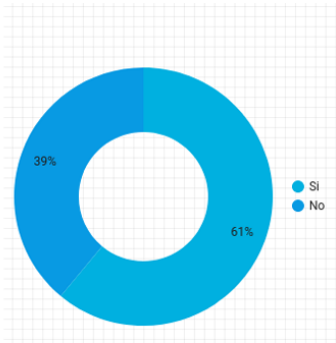
No information is available to account for the level of learning acquisition. As mentioned in the previous point, an effort has been made at the national level to have information to characterize educational continuity during the context of preventive and compulsory social isolation.

BOLIVIA

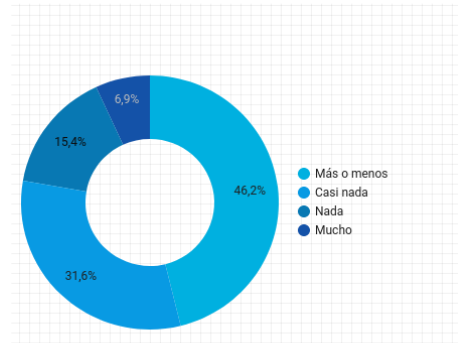
With the facilitation of different modalities, families and young children are encouraged to acquire skills and learning that include them in their daily routine: play time at home, healthy habits (reinforcing hand washing), emotional support and strengthening communication within the family.

Unfortunately, the issue of access and learning is not only relevant to vulnerable groups. As the U-REPORT survey conducted in June 2020 shows, and although it only applied to a small population of adolescents who have mostly full access to the Internet, students continue to express concern about the low access to virtual education and how little they are learning:

Reaching the Most Vulnerable Children



Do you have access to online classes in your school/university/high school?



Would you say you are learning with this new modality?

COSTA RICA

The Ministry of Public Education, with support from UNICEF and UNESCO, is preparing to carry out an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on children in the education system, in order to determine the extent to which its home-learning strategy has been successful. This will involve assessing outreach strategies through printed materials, traditional media (such as national television, through which some educational programmes are provided) and the digital platform (to which less than half of the children in the education system have access).

EL SALVADOR

The learning outcomes have not yet been measured. Such assessments are being considered within the Education Cluster but have not yet been implemented. The planned assessments are as follows: Strategy for monitoring, evaluation and post-crisis transition in the education sector (to be supported by UNESCO), Evaluation Methodology for the identification of learning in the different modalities; Impact of distance education (to be supported by UNICEF and Save the Children).

NICARAGUA

UNICEF aims to improve the pedagogical capacities of teachers in this community modality, most of whom are members of the "voluntaries" community. UNICEF is in the process of knowing, through a diagnosis, the reality of this group of teachers particularly in the Caribbean Coast, the most rural and marginal region of the country.

PANAMA

With regard to children's learning at this stage, we consider it necessary to: a) generate evidence of who is being reached by the distance mode (with physical materials, online, offline, etc.), b) document the learning on the basis of the competencies prioritized in the curriculum adapted by the country and the instruments for recording them. This will imply a greater effort to measure access to distance education in populations with greater vulnerability or risk of exclusion.

SURINAME

UNICEF is supporting MoE to strengthen the monitoring of the different types of distance learning alternatives. The UNICEF learning passport will particularly aid in tracking and monitoring actual learning.

VENEZUELA

Currently, the Ministry of Education is in a phase of systematization and evaluation after the socialization and discussion of regional and local initiatives. A national meeting was held with middle school students (adolescents) to socialize their

distance learning experiences. Discussion groups are currently being developed at the regional level to evaluate student learning, from the evaluation mechanisms implemented. The evaluation strategy used was the pedagogical portfolio, evaluation to what extent the portfolio allowed to collect information on student learning. This evaluation and review process will allow curricular adaptation for the distance learning plan for the next school year.

6. MAIN CHALLENGES

- Quantitative information on access and learning outcomes of the strategies implemented by the COs and MoE has proven challenging to get.
- Access and learning are not only being a challenge for vulnerable children. Evidence shows that also children with access to the Internet show concerns about their limited access to virtual education and the resulted acquired knowledge.
- Although distance learning strategies have been defined in all countries of the region, there are still large gaps in information on how these initiatives are reaching most vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, migrant children, refugee children and children from rural areas, etc.
- It is important to identify the bottlenecks and barriers that make it difficult for the most vulnerable groups to access educational opportunities and to define contextualized responses that respond to the specific needs of each of these groups.
- Educational strategies must be accompanied by a continuous monitoring process that allows for the identification of warnings not only related to learning but also to protection issues.
- It is necessary to identify vulnerable groups and their specific needs, document good practices that can be replicated in other countries and strengthen systems for monitoring and evaluating learning.
- Inter-sectoral work must be strengthened to ensure a comprehensive response to guarantee access and learning, protection, psychosocial support, protection and prevention of gender-based violence.

