



**Education in Emergencies:
UNICEF Interventions in Latin America
and the Caribbean during COVID-19**

Education in Emergencies: UNICEF Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean during COVID-19

Authors: Justin Rotundo & Landon Newby

General supervision: Margarete Sachs-Israel, Regional Education Adviser

General coordination: Ruth Custode, Education Specialist, Juan Camilo Pinzón, Education Specialist, and Tania González Veiga, Education Consultant

Graphic design: Osvaldo Sánchez

Cover page photo: © UNICEF Ecuador/2020/Arcos

The contents of this document are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNICEF.

The total or partial reproduction of the contents of this document is authorized only for research, advocacy and education purposes; as long as they are not altered, and the corresponding credits are attributed (UNICEF). This publication may not be reproduced for other purposes without prior written authorization from UNICEF. Permission requests should be sent to the Communication Unit, comlac@unicef.org.

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Panama City, November 2020

This document was prepared by the Education Section of the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

UNICEF

Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office

Building 102, Alberto Tejada St., Ciudad del Saber

Panama, Republic of Panama

PO Box: 0843-03045

Telephone: +507 301 7400

www.unicef.org/lac

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. Methodology | 4 |
| 3. Findings | 5 |
| 3.1. Beneficiaries..... | 5 |
| 3.2. UNICEF Country Office Activities | 6 |
| 3.2.1. Distance Learning..... | 7 |
| 3.2.2. Technical Support | 12 |
| 3.2.3. WASH and Virus Prevention | 15 |
| 3.2.4. Assessment and Monitoring | 18 |
| 3.2.5. Well-Being and Child Protection | 20 |
| 3.2.6. Teachers and Other Education Personnel..... | 23 |
| Annex A – Country Case Study: Peru | 26 |
| Annex B – Country Case Study: Ecuador | 26 |

1. Introduction

COVID-19 has affected more than 150 million learners in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In response, almost all countries have closed schools to arrest the spread of the virus. As a result of the school closures, children are now confined to their homes where considerable safety risks and disruptions to learning exist. Vulnerable populations, especially girls, are at an increased risk of violence, sexual abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Steps need to be taken to ensure that children are protected during this period as well as provided with education to ensure continuity of learning.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, UNICEF Country Offices (CO) have been rapidly responding to minimize any negative and lasting effects on children. Context appropriate strategies for continuous learning have been developed that leverage online e-learning platforms, radio, and television to deliver education. The COs have also been working diligently to support governments with education sector contingency plans and advocate so that schools, teachers, and families are adequately prepared for further school closures as well as their eventual reopening.

This report provides a mapping of those responses, identifies gaps, and highlights best practices. In so doing, it is hoped that decision makers at the regional and country level will possess the knowledge they need to make timely and effective decisions that will ultimately affect millions of children in the region.

2. Methodology

This mapping was conducted using a multi-pronged approach for gathering relevant information and data. An initial desk review was conducted of the 25 Country Offices¹ (CO) response plans and 11 Regional Office (RO) updates that were shared by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO). The reviewed documents provided an initial understanding of the COVID 19-related, Education in Emergencies (EiE) activities each of the 25 offices have been engaged in since the start of the pandemic².



©UNICEF/JN0352056

¹The Response Plans include the 24 UNICEF Country Offices as well as the Eastern Caribbean Area Office. While the ECA represents multiple countries, for the purposes of this analysis, it was counted as a single country/office.

An analysis framework/tagging taxonomy was developed in consultation with the RO and used to tag COVID-19 related, EiE activities that were specifically reported in the CO Response Plans using the online data management software, DEEP³. From this, a user-friendly, searchable database was created in Excel to conduct and in-depth, cross-country analysis of those activities.

In order to further deepen the analysis, primary data collection was conducted through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with the education focal points of six COs (Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Uruguay). These interviews helped illuminate specific successes and challenges faced as they responded to the pandemic. Of these six interviews, two cases studies were created highlighting best practice examples. These are presented in two [annexes](#) at the end of this report.

3. Findings

The findings for the report are organized into two sections: [Beneficiaries](#) and [Country Office Activities](#). The Beneficiaries section focuses on the targeted populations of the COVID-19 related EiE activities being conducted by COs as well as any specific mention of targeting a vulnerable population type. The Country Office Activities section is broken down into the thematic response areas each CO engaged in:

- [Distance Learning](#)
- [Technical Support](#)
- [WASH and Virus Prevention](#)
- [Assessment and Monitoring](#)
- [Well-being and Child Protection](#)
- [Teachers and Other Education Personnel](#)

3.1. Beneficiaries

COs are conducting COVID-19 related EiE activities that targeted both children and adults. The following tables show the percentages of COs targeting school-aged children (with age levels broken down by education level) as well as the types of adult beneficiaries.

| Children | % of COs |
|------------------|----------|
| Pre-primary aged | 32% |
| Primary aged | 100% |
| Secondary aged | 56% |

| Adults | % of COs |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Teachers/Other Education Personnel | 96% |
| MoE Officials | 88% |
| Parents/Caregivers | 80% |
| Health Personnel | 20% |
| Community Members | 12% |

Every Response Plan that was reviewed specifically mentioned targeting primary-aged children. Interestingly, of the 25 Response Plans, only 32% were targeting pre-primary-aged children and 56% were targeting secondary-aged children with activities. The types of activities being conducted will be discussed in [Section 3.2](#) below.

² It should be noted that the plans were developed earlier in the crisis and as such may not be indicative of every activity each CO has engaged in as these plans may be evolving on a regular basis.

³ DEEP is a web-based platform offering a suite of collaborative tools tailored towards sourcing, managing and analyzing secondary data in humanitarian crisis responses. Development of DEEP began in early 2016 and is a collaborative project governed by UN OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, ACAPS, IFRC, IDMC, OHCHR, IDMC and JIPS. Although open-source, data is secure and visible only to users granted relevant access.

Of the adult beneficiaries, teachers and other education personnel (96%) are being targeted by COs the most frequently. Many of the offices targeting teachers are engaging in capacity development activities to increase their effectiveness at delivering remote education (see Section 3.2.6. below). A small number are providing PSS directly to teachers. MoE officials are directly mentioned in 88% of the Response Plans. Typically, direct support to MoE officials has come as supporting the development of safe school guidelines. For more on support for MoE officials, see Section 3.2.2. below. Also, of note is the 80% of COs that are targeting parents and caregivers with activities which typically involve PSS and guidance to support their child’s learning.

Many of the COs have also directly mentioned targeting beneficiaries with specific vulnerabilities, as outlined in the table below:

| Vulnerability | % of COs |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Children with Disabilities | 48% |
| Vulnerable (Unspecified) | 44% |
| Indigenous | 28% |
| Girls | 24% |
| Rural | 24% |
| Migrant | 20% |
| Out of School Children (OOSC) | 4% |
| Refugee | 4% |
| Impoverished | 4% |

Of the 25 Response Plans, 48% are conducting activities targeting children with disabilities. Indigenous (28%), girls (24%), and rural (24%) children are mentioned in the Response Plans as vulnerable population types that are receiving targeted support as well.



© UNICEF/UN0352054/Makyn

3.2. UNICEF Country Office Activities

Based on the analysis of the CO Response Plans, six different (yet intersecting) COVID-19 related EiE response categories were identified as well as activities supporting each of them. The table below outlines these response categories. Each of the categories is then discussed in-depth in the sub-sections below.

| CO Activity Dimension | % of COs |
|--|----------|
| Distance Learning | 100% |
| Technical Support | 100% |
| WASH and Virus Prevention | 96% |
| Assessment and Monitoring | 84% |
| Well-Being and Child Protection | 80% |
| Teachers and Other Education Personnel | 68% |

3.2.1. Distance Learning



3.2.1. Distance Learning

Ensuring continuity of learning is paramount during any crisis to reduce learning loss, especially for vulnerable populations. To ensure continuity of learning, many activities can be undertaken such as supporting the development of distance learning content to distributing high tech hardware or even distributing no-tech materials such as notebooks and other supplies. The table below outlines the various activities that are specifically mentioned in the 25 Response Plans.

| Distance Learning Activity | % of COs |
|--|----------|
| Delivery/Dissemination of Distance Learning Content | 100% |
| Development of Distance Learning Content | 76% |
| Distribution of Distance Teaching/Learning Materials | 92% |

Content Development and Dissemination

Once COVID-19 began spreading throughout the region, Ministries of Education began taking steps to protect students by closing schools completely⁴ precipitating the need to provide education remotely. In response, every office in the region reports that it will support the delivery of distance learning content for students. Of the 25 offices, 76% are engaged in developing content for distance learning activities which can be broken down into three specific content categories:

- *Education content for children:* The majority of educational and instructional content being developed is to support the continuity of education for primary-aged learners. Based on the Response Plans, only 20% of countries

specifically mention developing content for secondary-aged learners. However, it is possible that content being developed, especially for MoE platforms, could in fact provide content for secondary-aged learners in addition to primary. Only two COs, Mexico and Paraguay, specifically mention targeting pre-primary-aged children with educational content. Mexico has coordinated with national and regional partners to disseminate pre-primary educational videos. Paraguay has also developed videos for children 0-6 years old with the purpose of promoting reading at home. This is a clear gap that should be addressed by COs in the region given the importance of monumental development milestones that happen in early childhood.

- *Guidance for parents and caregivers:* Providing distance learning opportunities for students is crucial during the pandemic, but provision alone will not contribute to quality education. Parents and caregivers can help fill the role of a formal schoolteacher. However, many parents are unsure of how to adequately support their child's education. Having recognized this, 28% of offices are providing information directly to parents and caregivers on ways to support education continuity. Unfortunately, not all parents and caregivers are able to make use of text-based guidance messages. In response, the Guatemala office has coordinated with the MoE on providing illustration-based messages on how parents can support their child's education.
- *Training for teachers:* In addition to providing parents and caregivers with messages to support education continuity, 44% of countries are also conducting trainings targeted at teachers and other education personnel to ensure they effectively deliver education remotely. For more on capacity development activities for teachers and other education personnel, see [Section 3.2.6](#) below.

⁴Nicaragua is the only country to not have canceled face-to-face classes. However, due to the safety risks, many students are not attending.

The educational content being developed for children is designed to be delivered using a myriad of distance learning modalities and hardware, as outlined in the table below:

| Modality/Hardware | % of COs |
|---|----------|
| Television | 64% |
| Online E-learning Platform ⁵ | 60% |
| Radio | 60% |
| Audio/Visual (unspecified) ⁶ | 20% |
| Social Media | 12% |
| Podcast | 8% |
| Phone (basic) | 4% |
| Printed Materials | 24% |

PERU: DISTANCE LEARNING CONTENT DEVELOPMENT

Using lessons learned from El Niño in 2017, the UNICEF CO in Peru was able to quickly respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting the development of home-based education modules, including online components, to facilitate short-term, home-based education.

Television (64%) represents the most widely used distance learning modality seen among all of the CO Response Plans and content is being developed for all ages of learners. Importantly, subtitles can be added to programs to be inclusive of students with disabilities. For countries where TV ownership is high, the potential is there to provide educational content to a vast majority of students. Chile and Ecuador have both created specific educational channels to respond to the crisis. In Chile, the TV channel TVEducaChile transmits content for learners in grades 1-4. Aprendemos en tele is the educational TV channel in Ecuador. There are over 100 programs that are being broadcast to all channels in the country. However,

6 in 10 households in Ecuador do not have access to a television. Perhaps the most interesting example comes from Paraguay where a partnership with Sesame Street has resulted in a program delivering TV-based pre-reading content.

Of the 25 Response Plans, 60% specifically mention supporting the delivery of content through online e-learning platforms. The most used e-learning platforms, based on the Response Plans, are MoE developed websites. Belize, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, and Haiti have all developed their own sites to disseminate content. The lone reference to an online e-learning platform that was not designed by the MoE was La Aldea in Colombia. This online e-learning platform is aligned to Colombia's national curriculum and teaches students literacy, numeracy, and science through stories about a group of students.

RADIOS IN ECUADOR

Radio revistas are radio programs that used trained disk jockeys to relay information about the importance of education as well as some PSS messages. They also inform people to call in with suggestions. This allows the Ecuador CO to collect information on the local context and tailor the response accordingly.

Online e-learning platforms can be useful as a means to deliver education. It is also encouraging that MoEs in eight countries have developed their own websites to host content. This will certainly contribute to quicker action and ensure continuity of learning in the event of another crisis. However, issues of access will present the biggest challenge to e-learning being a useful modality in all contexts. Radios, on the other hand, are ubiquitous and could provide a more accessible means to deliver education remotely.

To overcome that exact problem, 60% of the Response Plans specifically mention delivering educational content using radios. The CO in Peru is supporting radio programs to deliver education to secondary-age students in rural areas who do not have access to online e-learning platforms.

⁵ Online e-learning platforms are those that require a high-tech, internet-enabled device such as a computer (laptop or desktop), tablet, or smartphone to access.

⁶ All modalities/hardware transmit content either by audio or video. If a Response Plan did not specifically state which modality/hardware was being used, the activity was tagged with the broader audio/visual category.



Almost 10% of Peru’s population lives in areas without internet access and can greatly benefit from expanded radio programming⁷. In Brazil, the CO is supporting the production of radio shows as well. Programs being developed use storytelling techniques to deliver content as well as include anti-xenophobia messaging.

Other remote modalities have been pursued by offices as well. Social media is being used by 12% of COs to deliver content. In Ecuador, an assessment concluded that WhatsApp was the most effective way to reach children with educational content and in Cuba, Facebook was used to stream a session with information for parents on supporting learning for children with autism. The Brazil CO has supported the development of a podcast series “Deixa que eu conto” that broadcasts stories for children, aged 4-10, and their families.

Only one CO, Belize, specifically mentioned leveraging mobile phones for distance learning, but did not specify how they would be used. It should

be noted that basic mobiles are typically very cheap communication options and have a rich history of being used to deliver text-based content or through pre-recorded audio messages. Offices may wish to pursue mobile phones more vigorously as a way to deliver remote education, especially for remote populations.

While these efforts are bridging the gap for some learners, still others remain without access to any device capable of accessing distance learning opportunities. For these students, printed materials may be the only way they are able to continue to receive an education. Six COs specifically mention using printed materials as a medium for delivering distance education. Belize and Haiti, for example, are both working with local newspapers to deliver content. In Belize, special edition newspapers are printed every two weeks for primary and secondary students. Haiti is reaching more than 25,000 students through a collaboration with a local newspaper to deliver free reading and learning materials for six months.

⁷Statistic is based on an interview with CO staff.

Distribution of Distance Teaching and Learning Materials

While remote learning delivered via electronic devices has the potential to reach large segments of the population, not everyone has access to the required devices necessary to receive education in this way. In order to overcome this barrier, some COs in the region, such as Cuba, Jamaica, and Nicaragua as well as the ECA office are supporting efforts to deliver devices directly to learners. The Jamaican CO and ECA office have specifically targeted vulnerable populations with their technology distributions. The Jamaica CO, for example, has delivered over 200 tablets to children with disabilities to support their continuity of learning as well as provided the data SIM cards necessary for them to access networks. The ECA office has provided digital devices to the most vulnerable students. Distribution of these devices has occurred on the islands of Anguilla, Barbados, Dominica, Tobago, Turks and Caicos, and the Virgin Islands.

While online e-learning platforms may have spaces to write notes or do calculations built into their system, pencil and paper will always be necessary for learning. If a student is tuning in to a radio program, but does not have the materials to take notes, that child's education is suffering. Knowing this, 72% of offices have specifically mentioned delivering these types of no-tech teaching and learning materials directly to students and schools.

Challenges

Two challenges are specifically noted from the analysis in the provision of distance learning. The first being access. Large strides have been made with educational technology, but many students are still not able to access e-learning platforms that require an internet enabled device. While these are wonderful options to deliver distance learning, context must always be considered when determining the most effective way to deliver education. Mobile phones could potentially be used by a greater number of offices as well. They are cheap and have been used successfully as a distance learning modality. The other main challenge is inclusion. Children with disabilities were only specifically mentioned as being targeted with distance learning in 48% of Response Plans. Children with disabilities need particular attention if they are to remain engaged with educational opportunities once school returns to normal operations.



3.2.2. Technical Support



3.2.2. Technical Support

In addition to the other forms of support already discussed, offices in the region are also engaging in providing technical support to MoEs. The table below details the most common forms of technical support that were seen throughout the response plans.

| Technical Support | % of COs |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Safe School Guidelines | 60% |
| Drop-Out Prevention | 24% |
| EiE Planning and Development | 20% |
| Grant Management | 12% |

Safe School Guidelines

As has been stated previously, MoEs throughout the region are slowly beginning to reopen schools for students. Plans are being developed to ensure that this can be done safely. In support of this goal, 60% of the Response Plans reviewed mention supporting MoEs with back to school plans and safe school guidelines. The safe school guidelines draw on some of the other activities previously mentioned, such as the promotion of virus prevention and positive hygiene practices and training teachers and education personnel on these topics.

Notably, the CO in Guyana has structured the school reopening plan around three thematic areas: wellbeing and protection/psychological support; safe operations, and learning. Additionally, they are working to build the capacity of the MoEs crisis management team to tackle any problems related to reopening that may arise. Meanwhile, the Ecuador CO is helping the MoE to develop a rapid diagnostic tool that will guide the school reopening plan. In Peru, the CO highlighted the back to school plan as a major success as this has a high level of political impact and increases the clout of the CO in the eyes of the government. Additionally, the Peru CO is working with sub-national governments on their individual strategic reopening plans as well.

Drop-Out Prevention

Learners who were prone to drop-out before COVID-19 were already vulnerable. The disruption to education due to pandemic is likely to have made them even more so. To combat this and minimize the number of students dropping out, 24% of offices are providing technical support to drop-out prevention programs. In Brazil, the School Active Search strategy is being implemented to identify and re-enroll out of school children into the public-school system. The school closures are being used as an opportunity to train local staff on the platform to increase its effectiveness. And in Peru, a holistic approach is being considered in regards to their drop-out prevention activity. A technical team is being led by the CO to design a national strategy that considers additional factors such as gender and children working in the informal labor market.

Education in Emergencies Planning and Development

Of the 25 offices in the region, 20% are supporting MoEs in planning for future emergencies. Of the response plans reviewed, Cuba is engaged in procuring computers and telecommunications equipment to support continuity of learning. In so doing, they are also assessing the sustainability of these solutions for future emergencies. The ECA office is supporting the updating as well as the development of school level EiE contingency plans. The CO in Nicaragua is also supporting the development of an EiE continuity plan. An interesting facet of their plan is the compression of the curriculum to identify priority areas as well as outlining potential catch-up activities.

The mention of catch-up activities in the Nicaragua CO Response Plan is encouraging as it is the only CO that discusses catch-up activities⁸. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire world for most of 2020. In response, schools have closed, and children have missed out on learning. When the situation becomes more stable and schools reopen, educational authorities and UNICEF offices in the region will need to be prepared through catch-up classes and other accelerated education programming to address the learning gaps that will be present.

DROP-OUT PREVENTION IN URUGUAY

The Uruguayan CO has designed a scholarship program for students in the first year of secondary school who are at an increased risk of dropping out. The program has three components: 1) Educational centers develop a proposal that details the educational goals of the child. Each proposal is tailored to the specific needs of the child. 2) The child, the child's parents or caregivers, and school principal all agree to abide by the agreement by signing. 3) UNICEF distributes a four-month scholarship contingent upon the student successfully completing the objectives laid out in the agreement.

Grant Management

Finally, it should be noted that three COs (Guyana, Haiti, and Nicaragua), mentioned acting as grant agents. All three COs applied for Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Accelerated Funding request in order to offset the cost of conducting education-related activities in response to COVID-19.

Challenges

Under-resourced governments are hard pressed to adequately prepare for a crisis like COVID-19. Rapidly assessing the situation and developing an adequate response plan is a constant battle, but the Country Offices were quick to respond to the crisis and provide the support MoEs have needed to bolster the effectiveness of their responses. However, a key challenge remains – advocating for emergency response plans for future emergencies. Being proactive can help to minimize negative effects of any disaster and a successful advocacy strategy will help drive future emergency preparedness. However, this may not be a reality for all COs, particularly those with unstable political situations and very centralized governments such as Nicaragua. In those cases, COs should develop some critical lessons learned for themselves to help prepare for all future crises.



©UNICEF/ECU/2020/Arcos

*The Suriname CO Response Plan does mention addresses learning gaps, but it does not detail how it plans to address them.

3.2.3. WASH and Virus Prevention



3.2.3. WASH and Virus Prevention

A key component of the Response Plans is to ensure sanitary conditions in schools. Many schools have started to reopen and allow students to return to face-to-face classes. In Uruguay, for example, every rural school had reopened by May 4th and schools that have majority vulnerable populations began reopening on June 1st. Given the transmissibility of COVID-19, this is an intervention area that requires a great deal of attention. The table below details the activities being undertaken by COs to prepare students, teachers, and other education personnel with the knowledge needed to stem the spread of COVID-19 and ensure a safe learning environment.

| WASH and Virus Prevention Activities | % of COs |
|---|----------|
| Virus Prevention and Hygiene Messaging | 84% |
| Distribution of Cleaning and Hygiene Items | 64% |
| Training on Virus Prevention and Positive Hygiene Practices | 36% |

Virus Prevention and Hygiene Messaging

84% of the Response Plans specifically mention promoting proper hygiene practices as well as raising awareness of COVID-19 for students, teachers, and other education personnel. As schools reopen and students begin returning to classes, virus prevention messages must be prominently displayed to raise awareness about the risks poor hygiene practices have on spreading COVID-19. Eight offices (Belize, Bolivia, ECA, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, and Honduras) all specifically state that they will launch handwashing campaigns in ECD centers, schools, and other public locations. In addition to launching handwashing campaigns, the office in Belize is supporting the MoE with the development and dissemination of posters for children that promote good hygiene practices. These can be used in schools to constantly remind students how to practice good hygiene and prevent community transmission.



©UNICEF/JUN0324434

Distribution of Cleaning and Hygiene Items

People that lack access to proper sanitation facilities and potable water are at an increased risk of spreading COVID-19. Particularly in schools, there is an incredible need to ensure that children are able to act on the guidance that is being disseminated. In response, 64% of Response Plans specifically mention distributing cleaning and hygiene items directly to schools. For instance, in Paraguay, the CO has delivered supplies for the cleaning of schools. The CO in Guyana has procured and distributed hygiene and prevention items (soap, hand sanitizer, and masks) for use in schools. And in Cuba, hygiene items and collapsible water tanks have been distributed. The CO in Nicaragua has delivered over 6,000 cleaning kits to the MoE which covers about 65% of schools in the entire country. Given that Nicaragua has not canceled face-to-face classes, it is critical to ensure the cleanliness of schools and can be seen as a success for the Nicaraguan CO.

Cuba was the only CO to directly mention supporting the MoE by sanitizing children's circles and residences for itinerant teachers from other provinces.



©UNICEF/ECU/2020Diéguez

Training on Virus Prevention and Positive Hygiene Practices

In addition to spreading messages of positive hygiene practices and virus prevention measures that should be followed, some COs (36%) have provided specific trainings to health professionals, psychosocial support staff, teachers, school staff, parents, caregivers, and children to solidify these concepts. The CO in Brazil has supported the preparation of a hygiene/virus prevention module to be included to an existing distance learning course aimed at health professionals and members of the community. Health professionals were trained in Bolivia to assist rural and indigenous communities to safely operate schools. For specific trainings targeting teachers and other education personnel, see [Section 3.2.6](#).

Challenges

A key challenge identified in the analysis was the dearth of activities that rehabilitated or built WASH facilities in schools. While almost all COs engaged in virus prevention and positive hygiene practices messaging, very few specifically mentioned providing or enhancing WASH facilities in schools. Since schools are beginning to reopen in many parts of the region, ensuring access to WASH facilities will be instrumental in allowing students and teachers to put into practice what they have learned about hygiene and virus prevention.

3.2.4. Assessment and Monitoring



3.2.4. Assessment and Monitoring

The need to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on education will be paramount. Many children will experience disruptions in the education, more will drop out, and psychological stress is likely to increase. Overall, this will greatly affect the quality of education. Without conducting thorough needs assessments, it is unlikely responses will be tailored adequately.

| Assessment and Monitoring | # of COs |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Impact of COVID-19 on Education | 80% |
| Distance Learning Monitoring | 24% |
| WASH Monitoring | 24% |

Fortunately, 80% of countries have specified in their Response Plans that they would assess the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education. As this crisis has caused entire countries to shutter their

school doors, pursuing this activity with vigor will be critical to understanding what students need in terms of remedial education once schools reopen.

Additionally, six COs (Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, and Nicaragua) are all undertaking activities to specifically assess the distance learning programs they are implementing although no additional information was gleaned for the response plans about how this monitoring is being conducted. For WASH activities, Mexico provides the best examples of monitoring systems. The Mexico CO is developing a dashboard to be used for monitoring WASH infrastructure and functioning in schools, among other uses. The Bolivia, Guatemala, and Nicaragua COs are all implementing monitoring of infection prevention and control enhancements, but do not describe these monitoring systems in detail.

All offices should be conducting monitoring activities. Without constantly monitoring and assessing the evolving situation, offices will have no way of knowing what activities are working and which ones need to be cut. Again, it is possible that monitoring activities are taking place, but are not reflected in the Response Plans beyond what has already been mentioned.



© UNICEF/UN0352073/Makyn

3.2.5. Well-Being and Child Protection



3.2.5. Well-Being and Child Protection

In the context of COVID-19, schools have closed, and children are no longer able to access the typical support networks that schools offer. Prolonged separation from social networks as well as uncertainty about COVID-19 can have detrimental effects on a child's well-being. Additionally, more time spent at home increases chances of abuse and exploitation. Ensuring a child's, as well as their parents' and caregivers', well-being is critical to reduce instances of violence and promote positive mental health. Psychosocial support for children and their parents and caregivers is critical to ensure stress does not become toxic. It should also be noted that being habitually food insecure can potentially play a large role in stress levels as well. The table below outlines activities COs have pursued to reduce the psychological damage due to COVID-19.

| Well-Being and Child Protection Activities | % of Countries |
|--|----------------|
| Psychosocial Support (PSS) | 64% |
| Psychosocial Support Training | 20% |
| School Feeding | 36% |
| Child Protection | 28% |

Psychosocial Support (PSS)

Psychosocial support helps children manage stress in a positive way. During times of extreme stress, such as a pandemic, it is understandable for children to have elevated stress levels. While some stress is normal for every individual, heightened levels of stress can become toxic and inhibit growth. For children, this can have detrimental effects on their development. As such, it is important to provide the support necessary to ensure this does not happen. 64% of COs throughout the region are conducting PSS-related activities to minimize any lasting negative effects of the pandemic. In Uruguay, the CO is providing psychosocial support, in partnership with the National Children Institute, to children who are

in residential foster care. The Jamaica CO has partnered with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and the Ministry of Health and Wellness to institute a telehealth and counselling program. Support for this program is necessary since clinic visits were stopped with the onset of COVID-19. And in Peru, selfcare videos are being disseminated through the learning platform Aprendo en Casa. A final interesting example comes for the Paraguay CO. They have been preparing children and families to handle their fears and anxiety of returning to school in the face of possible risks of contracting the disease.

PSS IN ECUADOR

The Ecuador CO is supporting efforts to deliver PSS messages directly to caregivers during COVID-19. The messages are directed at caregivers so that they are able to take care of their own mental health to decrease tensions. They are also meant to help organize daily family life, taking into account the needs of children and adolescents and teach positive communication during times of crisis.

Recreational activity is often a component of PSS as this allows children to express themselves creatively and through physical activity. To support recreational activities, some COs (Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Mexico) specifically mention providing recreational materials and activities directly to children and their families. However, the plans do not describe specifics of the activities or materials distributed.

In addition to focusing on children, the nature of the crisis necessitates targeting parents and caregivers with PSS as well. In fact, most of the COs conducting PSS activities specifically state that the intention is to reach not just children, but families with their messaging. For instance, the CO in Argentina is providing well-being messages for children and their families to be broadcast on the national program We Keep Educating. The Ecuador CO is directly targeting parents and caregivers with selfcare messages to better manage their own emotional states which in turn can help decrease tensions in the household and the Cuba CO is using WhatsApp groups to provide selfcare to parents and families with autistic children.

Additionally, the ECA office is providing referrals for cases identified as needing additional assistance. A gap exists in referrals for PSS as the Jamaica CO and the ECA office were the only two offices that mentioned engaging in referring serious cases. With the stresses related to COVID-19, it is likely that more children will need additional support. Perhaps this is an area that can be addressed in more detail as the crisis continues.

Psychosocial Support Training

PSS to students⁹. It is possible that offices are already addressing this gap as the documents reviewed were from earlier in the pandemic and the evolving nature of the crisis would require adaptations to the responses.

School Feeding

A final well-being activity relates to the continuity of school feeding. Many children participate in these programs so the cessation of face-to-face classes can have detrimental effects on their ability to receive adequate nutrition throughout the day. However, 36% of COs around the region have been able to continue these programs. In Belize, 1500 beneficiaries of the School Feeding Program were at risk of not receiving a meal, but the MoE agreed to provide a package of uncooked food to students in lieu of the school feeding program. In Jamaica, the school feeding program has been converted into cash vouchers for families to buy the provisions they need.

Child Protection

Children are at an increased risk of abuse and girls are at an increased risk of experiencing GBV while confined to their homes. However, EiE-related child protection activities were only pursued by 28% of offices (Colombia, Dominican Republic, ECA, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Paraguay). As was seen with the virus prevention and hygiene promotion activities, the bulk of activities undertaken by the COs was messaging on preventing violence while confined to homes. Two examples come from the ECA office and Dominican Republic CO. The ECA office is sharing parenting practices to parents and caregivers in order to provide them with methods of positively interacting with their children during the pandemic. The Dominican Republic CO is also disseminating positive parenting and violence prevention messages, but from a gendered perspective.



© UNICEF/JUN1322359

Challenges

As can be seen from the Response Plans, more can be done in terms of responding to child well-being and protection issues. A gap exists in targeting parents with specific trainings on positive parenting and violence prevention. Additionally, referral mechanisms for cases that have been identified as needing additional support should be strengthened to increase the effectiveness of the PSS provided. If the crisis continues and families are required to stay confined to their homes, the risk of violence will increase. Early interventions that can help to minimize children being abused during this period should be more intensely pursued.

⁹Further discussion around teacher training on PSS can be found in Section 3.2.6.

3.2.6. Teachers and Other Education Personnel



3.2.6. Teachers and Other Education Personnel

Teachers and education personnel are a population that need to be considered in the contexts of a crisis. Not only are they expected to continue to provide educational opportunities to students, but they are also experiencing the same consequences of the crisis. As such, steps should be taken to identify their needs and address them.

Capacity Development

The main COVID-19 related EiE activity being conducted by offices for teachers and other education personnel centers around capacity development. Various capacity development subject matter has been discussed through this report. The table below summarizes what percentage of those activities specifically mention targeting teachers.

| Teacher Capacity Development | % of Offices |
|---|--------------|
| Distance Learning | 44% |
| Virus Prevention and Positive Hygiene Practices | 28% |
| PSS | 20% |

One identified need was to increase teacher capacity in facilitating distance learning and related modalities. Of the 25 CO response plans reviewed, 44% were conducting teacher training activities. Most notably, the Costa Rica CO has been supporting teacher training in digital media for education to over 66,000 teachers which represents 99% of all teachers in the country. The CO in Guatemala has been targeting teachers with capacity development activities as well. For instance, a blog is being published that highlights studies the MoE has conducted as well as best practice examples for them to reference as they work to provide remote education to their students. While these represent good examples of supporting teachers, more needs to be done to ensure they are effective at delivering education remotely. Remote education can complement teachers, but it cannot replace them. Good teachers are still the cornerstone of quality education.

TEACHERS IN PERU

The situation for teachers in Peru is dire. The cancellation of face-to-face classes has meant that many teachers are not receiving a salary. In fact, many have not been paid since June and those that do often find their salaries have been reduced. Unless solutions can be found, teachers risk losing their livelihoods which will have disastrous effects on the quality of education that students receive.

As frontline workers in schools, teachers need to understand the relationship between virus prevention and positive hygiene practices. As schools reopen and people come into closer contact with one another, it is likely that COVID-19 will spread if proper hygiene practices are not followed. Knowledgeable teachers can help prevent this. To equip teachers with the knowledge to stanch the spread of COVID-19, 28% of offices are conducting teacher training on virus prevention and positive hygiene practices. The ECA office is conducting trainings for school principals and teachers on the use of hygiene kits and preventative practices. In Peru, a training package was developed that prepared teachers to instruct students on COVID-19 prevention and protection as well as promoting hygiene habits and self-care.

As mentioned in the previous section, PSS-related activities were conducted by 64% of the 25 offices, but only 20% of Response Plans directly mentioned training teachers in providing PSS. During face-to-face classes and even remotely, teachers have access to students and, with proper training, can be taught to identify when a child is displaying symptoms of psychological distress. A potential gap exists in training teachers to identify and support the psychological needs of students. To promptly get students the support they need, this gap should be addressed¹⁰.



© UNICEF/UNI322367/Schverdfinger

PSS Support for Teachers

As teachers experience the same crisis, it is natural that they would experience any negative mental health consequences as well. A teacher experiencing increased levels of stress will not be as effective, making quality suffer. However, much like training on PSS, this does not appear to be a priority area. Guatemala and Peru were the only two that mentioned providing PSS directly to teachers. In Ecuador, teachers are being supported in their delivery of quality education by ensuring they are getting the care they need. PSS is being delivered directly to teachers using phones, social media, and online platforms and in Guatemala, the CO has made great strides providing PSS for teachers as well as advocating for their rights.

Challenges

Teachers are an integral part of any educational response and require commensurate targeting by COs with activities. While teachers were certainly targeted with some activities, more should be done to include them in response plans. Based on the CO response plans, teachers were frequent beneficiaries of activities, however, more can and should be done to ensure they have the support they need to provide quality distance learning opportunities for students.

¹⁰ It should be noted that although only five Response Plans discussed training teachers in PSS, it is possible that more are conducting since these plans reflect an earlier phase of the pandemic.

Annex A–Country Case Study: Peru

You can access the country case study [here](#).

Annex B–Country Case Study: Ecuador

You can access the country case study [here](#).

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
Building 102, Alberto Tejada St.
Ciudad del Saber
Panama, Republic of Panama
PO Box: 0843-03045
Telephone: +507 301 7400
www.unicef.org/lac

unicef 
for every child