

LACRO COVID-19 EDUCATION RESPONSE: UPDATE 19

SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE PROMOTION OF SAFE AND PROTECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

[Released on November 30, 2020]

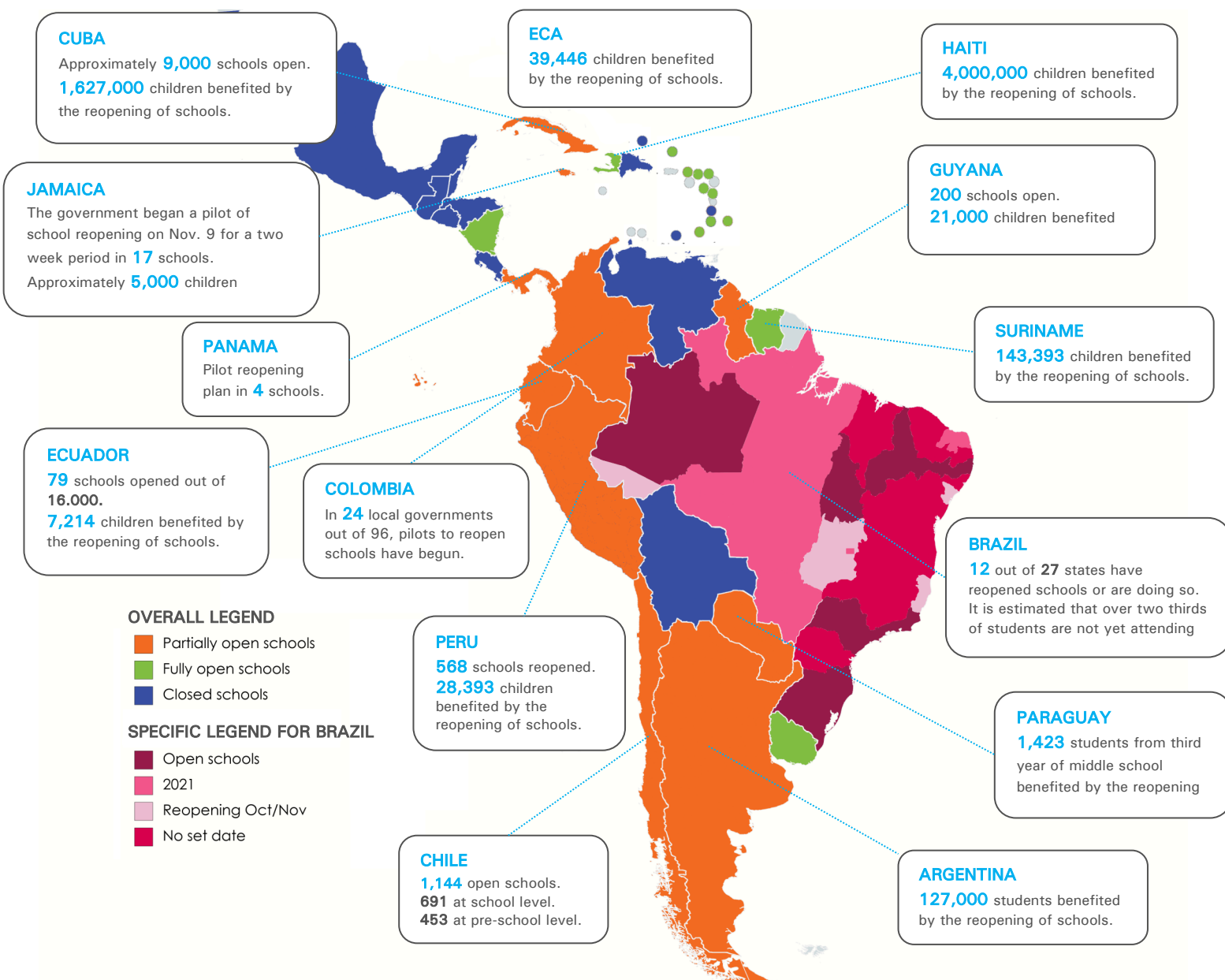
Next update: December 17, 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

More than eight months since the majority of countries in the LAC region closed their schools due to the pandemic, and still schools remain completely closed in over one-third of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. As of November 30, 12 countries and territories in the region have fully opened their schools, 11 of them have opened their schools partially and 13 have yet to open them. Due to school closures, children and adolescents are missing out much more than face-to-face learning, they are also missing out on the social interaction that plays a key role in their well-being, protection, development and social-emotional skills. In addition to offer an important platform to prevent and address violence against children, schools also provide students with a safe and protective learning environment, especially for the most vulnerable learners,

for which schools not only offer learning and development, but also food, and important information on key issues such as hygiene and their physical and mental health. Furthermore, the pandemic is deepening existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, affecting mainly those children that are already often left behind, including girls, migrants, refugees, children with disabilities, indigenous children, children living in lower income families, those living in rural or remote areas, etc.

Because it is of paramount importance for children's wellbeing and development to have safe and protective learning spaces, [update #19](#) focuses on the main education-related actions carried out by the CO in the region to create safe and protective environments for children and adolescents, including responses targeting both distance and face-to-face learning.

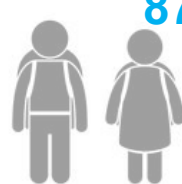


Note for the map: Please note that we have only included information about the countries for which we have received the data on number of schools open and number of children benefited by the reopening of schools.

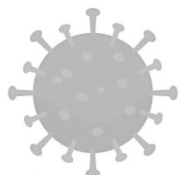
2. SITUATION OVERVIEW



13 countries and territories in the LAC region with **schools completely closed**.



87% of children (123M approx.) are not receiving **face-to-face classes** in the region due to school closures.⁴



An estimation of **194** school days on average without **face-to-face classes** since school closures in mid March to November 2.¹



12 countries and territories in the region (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Montserrat, Nicaragua, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Uruguay) have all their schools **fully open**.



11 countries and territories in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay and Peru) have opened their schools **partially**.



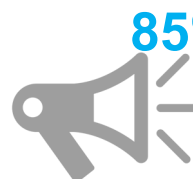
24 countries and territories in the region have developed **protocols** for the safe reopening of schools.



42M children in 24 countries supported by UNICEF in the provision of **distance learning programmes** during school closures.²



62% of countries in the LAC region have decided on a **date for school reopening**.⁵



85% of countries and territories have engaged in **advocacy or communications** for school reopening.³



22 countries and territories in the region continue school lessons through **remote learning** online or via television, radio, WhatsApp etc.



COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WITH REMOTE LEARNING: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, ECA, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.



25,921 schools implementing safe schools protocols (COVID-19).⁶

Sources of information

¹ Data from [UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean #COVID19 | Policy Documents Series](#).

² Data from [Global COVID-19 SitRep Indicators](#).

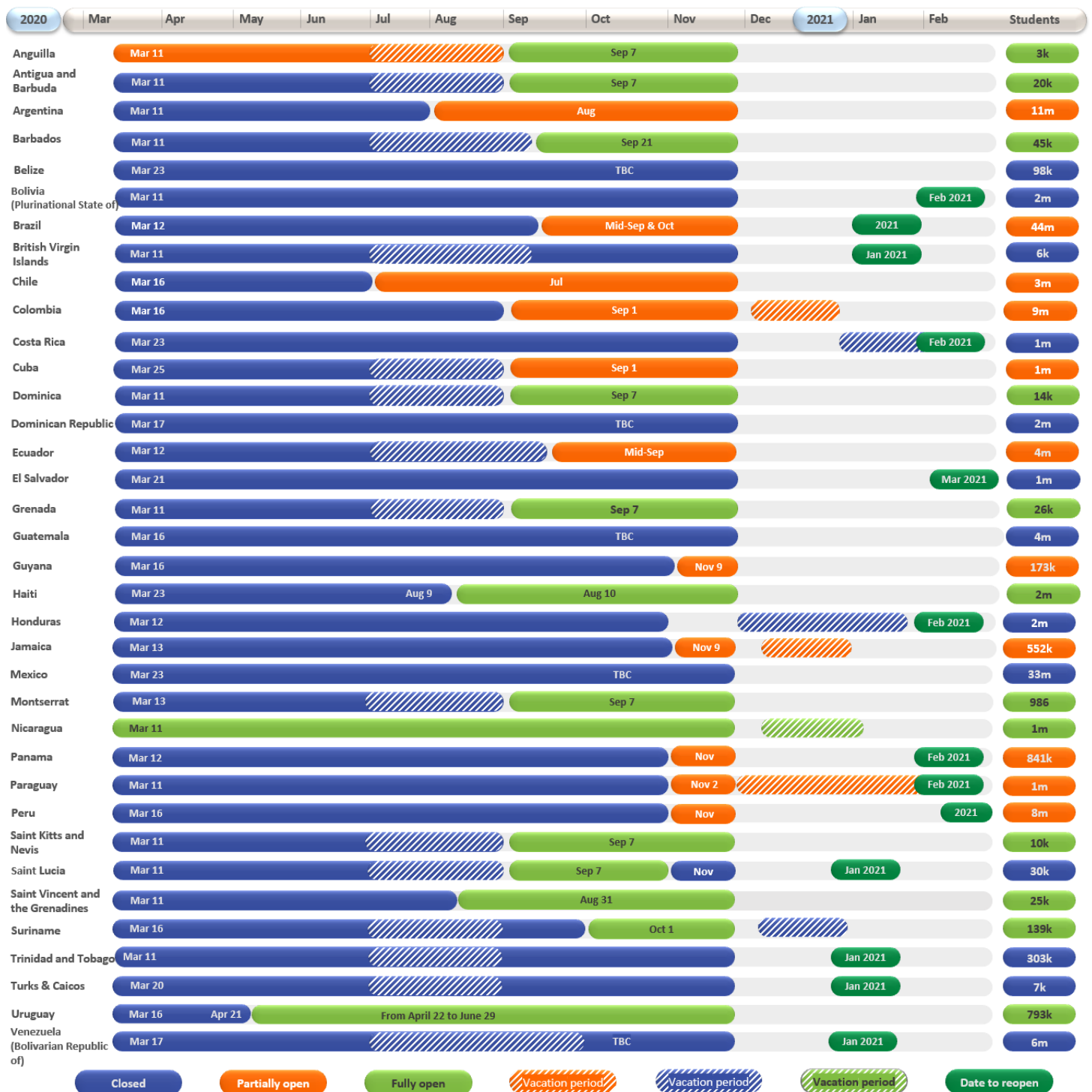
³ [Global Education Cluster, Tracker analysis Advocacy, 14 August 2020](#).

⁴ Data extracted from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Institute of Statistics, 'Welcome to UIS.Stat', <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>>. The figure 123M and the percentage 87% include the number of children and adolescents based in countries where schools are fully and partially closed, taking into account the number of children that attend face-to-face classes in countries where schools are partially closed.

⁵ [Global Education Cluster, Tracker analysis Advocacy, 14 August 2020](#).

⁶ [Global COVID-19 SitRep Indicators](#).

FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES TIMELINE⁷



Sources of information

⁷ Data reported from Cos updates. Information consulted from November 18 to 27, 2020.

3. COUNTRY OFFICES' INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE SAFE AND PROTECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Below are detailed the main actions that UNICEF Country Offices have carried out over the last months in the LAC region to promote safe and protective learning environments for children and adolescents within their education response in the context of COVID-19. These actions are related both to face-to-face learning and distance learning:

ARGENTINA

In coordination with the Ministry of Education, the CO has developed content for radio and television and printed notebooks for children from zero to 3 years old, 4 and 5 years, and 6-17 years. The CO has also supported the development and printing of educational booklets "Seguimos Educando" to ensure educational continuity in the most vulnerable contexts and in rural environments, trying to reach more than 6 million students, including early childhood, as well as a series of audiovisual resources to support families and children and adolescents in promoting positive parenting patterns, violence prevention and gender equity in the context of emergency and social isolation. These materials were published in the Ministry of Education's "Plataforma Seguimos Educando" (We Continue to Educate Platform) in order to convey these key messages to families, children and teachers, reaching 2.4 million families.

Lastly, UNICEF sections of Programmes and Communication support the development of three projects together with the official Paka Paka channel [#JuntosEnCasa](#) with 193 videos by generating content for adults to accompany children during the lockdown. The office is also promoting the rural secondary school model promoted in coordination with provincial governments, which is being developed in six jurisdictions of the country in dispersed rural secondary schools and supports the development of capacity building for management teams and teachers.

One of the main [challenges](#) is to maintain contact with families as evidence shows that many households, particularly the most vulnerable ones without technological resources, were unable to maintain contact with schools, which in turn leaves teachers and managers unable to intervene.

BELIZE

The CO supported the Ministry of Education's School Feeding Programme by delivering 1,500 nutrition hampers, including hygiene kits, to families in need affected by school closures, ensuring that

vital supplies reach the most vulnerable communities. Furthermore, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture to produce and air the TV and radio programme "[In It Together](#)", which is led by children and has kept children learning through COVID-19, while offering help to relieve stress during these challenging times. As a result of the impact that school closures have had on families' mental health, the office has also as also produced and broadcast messages for parents and caregivers to assist children at home with psychosocial support.

One of the main [challenges](#) is that in Belize, one in three schools have no or limited hygiene services, therefore the CO continues to call upon governments to prioritize the most vulnerable children with basic water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and to raise awareness on the importance of handwashing by disseminating hygiene messages through Belize's radio, TV and print channels. Another challenge is the increase of violence against children since the beginning of the pandemic. UNICEF response has been focused on the provision to the the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation with guidance and supplies for remote reporting and handling of cases.

BOLIVIA

Efforts have been made above all in training teachers not only in the use of digital tools but also in providing violence prevention content (physical and online). The first version of the advanced course for Maestr@s Conectad@s (Connected Teachers) has been completed. This course has three modules, the first relating to innovative, creative and participatory methodologies for the classroom, the second module dealt with the concepts of good treatment in educational units, the promotion of values, the handling of emotions and the integral prevention of violence based on the formulation of Plans for Peaceful and Harmonious Coexistence. The third module dealt with the role of the teacher in psycho-affective care and the application of practical tools for emotional relief.

For the intermediate level, 31,121 teachers have received support to improve their digital skills and handling of virtual tools to ensure the rights of children and adolescents and principles of equity and equal opportunities. For the advanced level, 19,439 teachers have completed this level throughout the country, especially in the

departments of La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

The main **challenge** is that violence is accepted and normalized in the Bolivian context. Children are victims of corporal punishment at home because this is the traditional form of discipline. This requires not only sensitization of parents and teachers but also changes in attitude that require large and sustained efforts. It has been particularly difficult to address these issues virtually because of their sensitive nature.

BRAZIL

The CO has supported local governments on the continuity of education strategies and on preparatory measures for a safe reopening of schools:

- A [self-assessment panel on WASH](#), with guidance for school administrators, is being disseminated with the support of the National Union of Municipal Education Directors.
- UNICEF podcast series *"Deixa que eu conto"*, available on digital platforms such as their website, Spotify, YouTube and widely broadcasted on the radio, has already reached over 3,7 million people around Brazil.
- Successful School Pathways - a series of webinars to engage state governments on the implementation of strategies, aiming at the development of public policies to reduce age-grade distortion of school age children and adolescents, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Education that Protects. UNICEF launches three mini-courses on education that protects children and adolescents against violence, offered through the Moodle platform, had over 3.650 subscribers.
- *Local School Planning in the Transpandemic* is an Open online course prepared to support Basic Education employees and their community on building their local school plans in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- *Radio Super Panas*, radio shows in 2 languages designed for [refugee and migrant children](#) and [adolescents](#).

The main **challenge** is that across the country, 39% of public schools do not have access to adequate basic sanitation. Although this percentage rises among private schools, there are still great challenges of WASH for the reopening process in

public schools, especially in the most vulnerable communities.

CHILE

- Participation of the Ministry of Education's Advisory Commission for the reopening of schools.
- Establishment of the Civil Society Round Table to support the process of return to schools.
- Series of webinars in partnership with the Municipality open to the community.
- Development of a Guide with Technical Orientations for the return to schools and a Guide for Social-Emotional Support.
- Collaboration with the Undersecretary of Early Childhood Education.
- Monitoring the reopening of nursery schools.

The main **challenge** is to have the necessary funds available.

COLOMBIA

UNICEF Colombia has reached 55,755 children and adolescents with distance learning modalities, prioritizing rural communities, areas of triple affectation by COVID, conflict and migration where access to virtual education has been a challenge and children and adolescents in socio-economic disadvantage with barriers to access to education during school closures.

The Village (La Aldea) is a cross-cutting education strategy that enables children between the ages of 7 and 14 years to have fun while strengthening their skills in different areas. This multi-platform strategy is designed for home schooling and can be used by teachers and educational institutions to strengthen different skills that also drive them to change the environments of these children in a positive way.

The Learning Circles are a flexible education model certified by the Ministry of Education that allows the emotional bonding of out-of-school children and adolescents who are outside the education system for various reasons.

Some **challenges** include the consolidation and access to diagnostic information from the education sector to strengthen planning processes for protection strategies and programs, the development of relevant actions based on the territorial context of the educational communities and the access of students, teachers and public

officials in the education sector to technological resources, pedagogical tools and virtual sessions in the context of COVID-19.

COSTA RICA

Positive breeding has been promoted through videos aimed at the public and stories for children have been produced as support material. Masks have been delivered to care and development centers and supplies have been provided to indigenous areas. Critical hygiene supplies have also been provided to 642 schools housing 22% of the student population to ensure safe return. In addition, a communication strategy for safe return is also being prepared.

Main **challenges** include that because children remain at home, they do not have access to professional teaching staff, and there is a great lack of pedagogical skills among parents and caregivers. Furthermore, violence against children is also on the rise, therefore the CO is advocating for the return to the classrooms.

CUBA

The CO has designed orientation and psychological support activities, especially for mothers, fathers and early childhood caretakers. Other activities carried out include educational and emotional support sessions via WhatsApp, jointly carried out with the Pan American Health Organization, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and the national headquarters of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences. Additional activities include the design of [two infographies and a set of postcards](#) aimed at early childhood education spaces and school environments, from primary education to pre-university level focused on the main hygienic and distance measures to be taken when returning to the classroom. Furthermore, a series of Facebook Live orientation for families and teachers was also developed. With the aim to provide psychological support to families upon return to school, informing about measures and status of reopening in early childhood spaces and explaining conditions and regulations for education with children with disabilities vis-à-vis COVID-19. As part of the actions, weekly educational and emotional support meetings are also carried out in five WhatsApp groups that advise around 700 families from all over the country, especially those with children with intellectual disabilities and autism.

One of the **challenges** is that the country has protocols to encourage children to attend school safely, however, resources are insufficient. For example, there are not enough thermometers in schools to conduct daily surveys. UNICEF Cuba, PAHO and UNFPA are in the process of purchasing thermometers to donate to schools. Other challenges include the fear of families, however, guidance to families and actions taken in schools help to make families feel more secure.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

UNICEF has supported the design of the Comprehensive Strategy We Learn at Home, which has 4 pillars: (1) teachers who accompany and guide, (2) monthly booklets, (3) multimedia resources through TV and radio, and (4) monitoring for improvement. UNICEF is also designing monthly booklets with a plan of activities to be carried out from their homes, reaching students from pre-primary to third grade of secondary. It is important to mention that booklet #2 is also available to people with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, 74,104 teachers are currently trained, through a network of national, regional and district trainers with 2,788 technicians of initial, primary and secondary level. Lastly, the CO has also supported the design of 5 guides to orient school personnel on psycho-emotional support for children and adolescents.

The main **challenge** for the CO is time. Producing booklets that reach everyone monthly in an accessible and equitable manner takes time. Some children do not have the support of an adult in the home with the knowledge to work on the booklets. On the other hand, in recent days cases of teachers with COVID-19 have been reported. In addition, water conditions in schools have not improved.

ECA

- Provision of devices for disadvantaged and vulnerable children to access online education and provision of distance education through Radio and TV in St Lucia.
- Shared guidelines for the safe reopening of schools.
- Training of 1,725 teachers to deliver online classes.
- Provision of hygiene kits for safe reopening of schools benefitting 99,878 children.

- Provision of cleaning and sanitization supplies to ensure that the health and safety protocols are adhered to including in the ECD Sector for 99,878 children.

The main **challenge** is to be able to eliminate the access of children to inappropriate online material and to promote interaction while learning online.

ECUADOR

- Technical assistance for the preparation of the National Plan for Educational Continuity, School Permanence and Progressive Use of Educational Facilities and the adaptation of the regulatory framework.

- Advocacy and training for the implementation of a prioritized curriculum in the framework of the emergency.

- Design and implementation of methodologies for psychosocial support and reference to the protection system, including containment of educators.

- Promotion of the responsible and ethical use of technological tools and connectivity provided by UNICEF.

- Monitoring the situation of households in relation to the continuity of education, including elements of protection and biosecurity.

The main **challenge** identified by the CO is the provision of WASH services in schools for the progressive use of educational facilities and children's centers in order to visualize the transition from phase 1 (We Learn at Home) to phase 2 (We Learn and Together We Care) which involves the possibility of face-to-face education and through this also access to psychosocial support, protection, school feeding, WASH and other services that children access through face-to-face school attendance.

EL SALVADOR

The education cluster remains active and the Ministry of Education has been supported in the development of protocols for the safe return to school. In addition, a guide to psychosocial care for teachers for the return to school has been developed.

Messages about physical protection, mental health of children and adolescents at home, as well as on accompanying the family in learning for children and adolescents continue to be broadcasted on social networks and on UNICEF website, the media, talks,

Facebook Lives. Online violence prevention is also being promoted. In addition, UNICEF has strengthened the helpline of CONNA (National Council for Children and Adolescents) and has distributed information about its services, and with a wide network of partners offers psychological and psychosocial support especially for the most vulnerable children such as returnees, or children with disabilities.

In terms of **challenges**, education services are being delivered on a distance basis, therefore it is difficult to detect cases of children and adolescents in need of protection. On the other hand, it is challenging to combine aspects of mental health and protection in a sustained way within the education response to the pandemic. Lastly, another challenge is the lack of enough trained protection staff on violence against children, including online violence and gender-based violence to support and raise awareness among the student population.

GUATEMALA

During school closures in the country, the different modalities of distance education offered to children support the development of adequate learning environments for all children, including daily television programming; daily radio programming in Spanish and indigenous languages; television programs with sign language for people with disabilities; printed material for all levels in Spanish and indigenous languages and for students with visual impairment; text messages for mobile phones; and content in mass print media. Furthermore, the education response in the country also includes the development of mental health and psychosocial support materials for teachers, parents and students both in print and online modalities.

Among the **challenges**, it is relevant to highlight that there are several shortcomings in the Guatemalan schools that will make it difficult to return to classes, which will be done in a staggered and progressive manner as the schools meet the minimum requirements for the prevention of infection, distance and hygiene.

GUYANA

Some actions on the promotion of protective and safe learning environments for children include the development of protocols for the return to school and the development and implementation of hybrid approach to learning. In hinterland and riverine areas, learning packages were issued with teachers working with groups of no more than 5 children on a rotation basis, including children in pre-primary, primary and lower secondary. 90% of children in

Grades 10, 11 and 12 are engaged in face-to-face learning in schools on shift systems or rotation basis, while in other cases, teachers guide parents on strategies for monitoring children's activities with the learning packages. Furthermore, programs on TV and on-line platforms continue.

The main **challenge** includes the inadequate quantity and quality of staff to deal with protection issues through a holistic approach.

HAITI

To promote safe learning and protective learning environments for all children, UNICEF Haiti supported the Ministry of Education with the following actions:

- Printing and distribution of 22,000 posters on hand washing, and aspects of the sanitary protocols to all schools.
- Financial support to all 10 departmental education directorate to supervise and ensure safe learning environment in schools in the context of COVID-19.
- Distribution of WASH materials to schools to facilitated massive hand washing practices in schools.

The main **challenges** are based on the structural bottlenecks that existed before the onset of COVID-19, such as limited access to water in most schools, high student to teacher ratios in classrooms, and skepticism about COVID-19.

HONDURAS

The CO has carried out actions to promote mental health both online (such as municipal call lines and the digital platform "UNAH te escucha" jointly with the National Autonomous University); and face-to-face in communities and individual homes through the network of municipal psychologists and Honduran Red Cross volunteers. They have also made progress in adapting physical spaces in 4 municipalities with the highest rates of violence, in order to have friendly spaces for the provision of specialized services in mental health, counselling, tutoring, and links with the child protection system for child victims of violence and GBV. Furthermore, the office has also worked with key organizations in the community to monitor access to and quality of education (training, logistical support) as well as with parents to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills to adopt positive behavior change towards girls and adopt non-discriminatory practices towards LGBTI youth and children with disabilities for their protection from violence and gang involvement. Finally, work was done with teachers and the Ministry of Education to standardize protocols for the prevention of violence and care for victims of violence.

In terms of **challenges**, it has been difficult to reach children through virtual methods due to the lack of connectivity of around 1.4 million students in Honduras, as well as identify the most acute needs for protection due to the increase in cases of domestic violence and violence against children caused by months of confinement. UNICEF and organizations from the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) advocated for the reactivation of state child protection services and launched a communication campaign together with educational actors for the prevention of violence against children, the promotion of mental health and reporting/care routes.

JAMAICA

UNICEF has finalized a Humanitarian Program Document with a local NGO, Food for the Poor, to respond to cover WASH needs in two critical parishes targeting some 20,000 students and 19 schools, has donated 310 SIM-enabled, accessible tablets for children with special needs to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and is working on donating 224 more.

The office also supported the delivery of 1100 early childhood play and learn packs to children under 6 in quarantined zones, and the development of a free online virtual instructional school leadership course taken so far by 1200 school leaders. The office established a parent helpline and created Public Service announcements on COVID-19 and on what you can do to protect yourself including a series for parents of children with disabilities, as well as an Instagram live with a well-known developmental pediatrician. Lastly, the office has also created a teletherapy program functioning in a partnership between the Ministry of Health and Education funded by UNICEF and supported the expansion of conditional cash transfer to families of children with disabilities.

Among the **challenges**, the office acknowledges that Protection is very much a part of the education response as mental health training has been prioritized but the ability of children to report issues is at risk due to lack of contact.

MEXICO

The CO has developed the "Health in Your Hands" initiative, as a response to provide basic education schools with tools to generate better hygiene practices and to provide risk communication in the prevention of COVID-19. At least 280 schools in 5 states and Mexico City (85,000 students) will benefit from this initiative. So far, 240 educational figures have been trained and 845,000 teachers have received educational materials.

In addition, UNICEF Mexico has developed a self-learning course for teachers on psycho-social support, both for the social distancing phase and for the return to school. This course contains a module on how to approach and act in case they detect that one of their students is a victim of domestic violence. As of 23 November, 15,313 teachers had completed the online Psychosocial Support Training.

Furthermore, the Protection Area is carrying out psycho-social support activities through recreational and sports activities with children in migrant shelters, and the Area of Adolescents has developed the project "Contacto Joven", which offers psychosocial support to adolescents and young people through a network of volunteer psychologists and social workers that offer their service using the U-Partners platform linked to U-Report. U-Partners is a case management and messaging system that works through WhatsApp through which young people who require psychosocial support connect for free and anonymously with the specialist. So far, 9,827 cases have been attended to (68% female and 29% male).

In terms of [challenges](#), in a context of social distance and little access to support, children are more likely to be exposed to violence in a home where violent dynamics already existed before the pandemic. In addition, given the limited supervision due to the excessive workload of caregivers, as well as the increased number of hours that children spend using online networks, the risk of cyber-bullying or online violence increases. From January to August 2020, Mexico has received 329,308 criminal incidents on the Internet related to children and adolescents. In August of this year alone, 120,000 reports were received (Dirección Científica de la Guardia Nacional).

NICARAGUA

The CO has provided the Ministry of Education with hygiene kits for teachers and students as well as cleaning kits for schools, including inclusive education schools.

On the other hand, funding is being provided to give access to the Ministry of Education to a video conference platform with a capacity of 180 seats, with 100 people per seat, to conduct school administration processes, teacher training, and others, online. Also, a manual for teachers has been jointly developed and produced for the socio-emotional care of students, and it is now being translated into Miskito and Creole for schools in the Nicaraguan Caribbean. Lastly, support has been given to the reproduction of education guides for students with disabilities.

Some [challenges](#) include the lack of adequate supply of safe drinking water and sanitation in most schools, the lack of personal protection materials, and the lack of discipline in implementing biosecurity protocols.

PANAMA

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the CO has supported the development of audiovisual materials, which seek to promote the health and protection of children and adolescents. In addition, support and technical assistance were provided to the Ministry of Education which made it possible to have the biosafety protocol for the administrative reopening of schools in October. Technical support was also provided for the drafting of the Operational Regulations for educational support in the distance learning mode for educational continuity.

Lastly, technical support was also provided for the drafting and legalization of rules of conduct and guidelines for distance learning in the virtual mode ([Resolution 2324 of 28 July 2020](#)), as well as psycho-emotional support for the educational community in the Action Plan of the strategy "The star of education does not stop" (in Spanish "La estrella de la educación no se detiene").

The first challenge is the management of information as there is no tool to know efficiently the number of children affected by emergencies. On the other hand, the incorporation of the protection aspect in the education response involves the interaction of various actors as well as the coordination between them. In addition, there are groups of teachers and psychologists who have received training on activities to build resilience in children; however, this response is not systematized, nor is it documented.

PARAGUAY

The CO has developed different initiatives that support the promotion of protective and safe educational environments for children, some of them include:

- Love for Reading Project (online learning) Flyers, video tutorials, video stories, podcasts, guide for families and professionals. It is online on the networks and channels of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science.
- Math and STEAM initiative, #AprendoenCasa (online learning) Flyers, video tutorials, podcasts, guide for the use of the materials. It is online on the UNICEF and MEC networks and channels.
- Ñahemdumi Initiative: radio programmes for indigenous education, Initial and Basic School Education to reach children who do not have access to the internet. Emphasis on communication with an interdisciplinary approach.

- Tikichuela Mathematics Initiative in my home: radio programmes for early education and the first cycle of basic schooling to reach children who do not have access to the internet. Emphasis on maths skills.

The main **challenge** highlighted by the CO is data protection, image and children's access to the Ministry of Education and Science platforms.

PERU

UNICEF Peru is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Education to strengthen the issues of socio-emotional well-being and violence prevention in distance education. Educational materials, teacher training and webinars for families and officials have been developed for this purpose. UNICEF, in partnership with UNESCO, WB and IDB has supported the Ministry of Education in preparing the reopening of schools. The support for the welfare and inclusion axes -aimed at ensuring safe spaces- has been led directly by UNICEF.

The main **challenge** is to be able to strengthen the capacities of actors (teachers, managers, families and children), improve inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms and incorporate the protection dimension in virtual environments.

SURINAME

UNICEF is supporting the decentralization of the centralized student care/guidance department. The decentralized teams will cater to school clusters providing services including e.g., remedial, diagnostic, psychosocial, mental health, speech therapy. The support includes rehabilitating the teacher resource centers in select districts, capacity building of support teams, protocols development to providing guidance to teachers and students thus bringing protection services closer to students and teachers especially in face-to-face setting.

At the national level, action to strengthen the national child helpline and referral system has been implemented through the child protection section. A multi-sectoral child protection network exists, and the Ministry of Education is participating in this network. The Ministry of Education has also introduced a helpline specific to education to facilitate any protection issues or questions related to the reopening of schools, in addition to issues arising from distance learning. Furthermore, UNICEF provided technical support with the safe reopening protocol and supported with technical and financial assistance the improvement of safe school operations, including distancing measures, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and practices.

The main **challenge** relates to the limited capacity of teachers to recognize protection issues, providing first level response and referral and the lack of psychosocial student care providers on a school level.

URUGUAY

During school closures and now with schools open in the country, the continuation of Plan Ceibal as well as the provision of complementary social benefits associated with education such as school meals, scholarships help prevent the most vulnerable students from falling through the cracks. This long-term investment in digital learning has been pivotal to keeping children learning both during lockdown and the phased reopening process, which in turn has balanced in-person and online learning for children and adolescents. The country's investment in digital learning has gone beyond devices and connectivity and has also embraced teacher training on new pedagogies, including more student-centered methodologies. In addition, UNICEF, in partnership with Plan Ceibal and the National Administration of Public Education, developed a course on virtual learning for teachers to improve their long-term skills as educators. On the other hand, the provision of additional social benefits has reduced the impact of school closures in the country, particularly for the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Accessing to schools due to logistical issues have been one of the **challenges** identified in the country, as well as the existing inequities among children due to the due to the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19. In response to this, the CO worked with authorities on an inclusive Back-to-School campaign that involved cash transfers for students at higher risk of dropping out school.

VENEZUELA

- The office developed the design of the training of 2400 public school teachers in the psychosocial area through the development of face-to-face workshops and, with the pandemic and quarantine measures, the training proposal was adjusted to the distance training modality through webinars.

- Jointly with the Communication for Development in Education (C4D) section, 1,836 public school teachers received booklets on the rights of children and adolescents; guides on practices that promote environmental sustainability; tools for the safe use of digital technology; physical activity for children and adolescents; bullying in the school environment; growing up in equality; and play activities for children, as well as posters for the prevention of COVID-19.

- 33,334 children from public schools benefited from psychosocial activities, through strategies such as the guide [Building Futures Teaches You at Home](#), and videos on resilience and prevention of sexual abuse, among others.

- 373 teachers from AVEC's subsidized schools were trained with certification in the Psychosocial Program for educators: tools for emotional self-care, psychosocial care for children with a focus on prevention and protection, in accordance with INEE standards.

- 572 teachers from AVEC's subsidized schools received distance training in the design and implementation of the course in an online format for understanding, preventing and reducing peer violence in Educational Institutions; prevention of sexual abuse; prevention of family separation and prevention of child abuse; promotion of good

treatment for families; training of promoters of children's rights; prevention of abuse in digital environments during the COVID-19. Lastly, 253 parents were trained in prevention and care of child sexual abuse and 12,500 children are receiving key messages on child protection.

Main **challenges** include maintaining the coordination with UNICEF's protection section and continuing to develop protection issues from an educational perspective and from the reality of the school and families in this context of COVID-19; continuing to advocate at all levels and instances for Protection issues to be considered learning content, and continuing with efforts to work under humanitarian principles to further strengthen trust with all levels of government and Venezuelan civil society in order to access more spaces within the school and information on the situation of children.

4. REGIONAL ACTIONS

At the regional level, UNICEF's Regional Office has supported country offices by providing technical assistance and guidance in achieving protective educational environments. UNICEF has also developed regional guides for the safe reopening of schools and for telephone follow-up and violence prevention.

As part of the response to COVID-19, three virtual seminars were held on the inclusion of child protection approaches in education responses, coordinated by the regional education sector and the Regional Subgroup on Child Protection in Emergencies. These seminars were attended by more than **14,500** people from institutions and civil society. In addition, an agreement was reached with "Fútbol Más" partner for the development of materials for psychosocial support and violence prevention. These materials are aimed at teachers and contain recommendations and advice for school re-opening and distance learning contexts.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES (EiE)

The EiE team has developed and launched the report [UNICEF Interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean during COVID-19](#), which maps UNICEF LACRO COVID-19 related education in emergencies COs responses, gaps, highlights and best practices throughout the



region. In addition, the report analyses two particular CO responses, one on [Ecuador](#), and another one on [Peru](#). You can also access the report in Spanish [here](#) and the case studies here: [Ecuador](#), [Peru](#).

Access the recording of the official presentation on November 12 [here](#).



Earlier this month, the Latin America & the Caribbean Regional office has launched the report [Education on Hold. A generation of children in Latin America and the Caribbean are missing out on schooling because of COVID-19](#), a report that highlights the devastating consequences that school closures have had on children and adolescents' education across the region. The report's data also shows how COVID-19 has exacerbated the already existing inequities in the availability of



education in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report is also available in [Spanish](#).

The online course *The Right to Education in Times of Crisis* developed by the Universidad Abierta de Recoleta (UAR), the Cluster of Education of Venezuela, the MPPE (Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Educación) and the Universidad Nacional Experimental del Magisterio Samuel Robinson (UNEM) has now launched TV, radio and self-downloading offline versions of the course. You can access detailed information about the content and registration of the three new versions [here](#).



UNESCO's series of webinars "Leaving no one behind in times of the COVID-19 pandemic" has reached **108.220** participants since the beginning of the series. Do not miss the last three webinars:

- (#25) Availability of information on students in the context of mobility in the information systems. You can watch it [here](#).
- (#24) Results and lessons from education projects in the context of COVID-19: Venezuela. You can watch it [here](#).
- (#23) Reopening of schools: A look at child protection. You can watch it [here](#).



Lastly, the online training *Creando Aula: practical educational tools for teachers in the emergency context*, created under the umbrella of the Regional Education Group by Plan International, UNICEF, World Vision, RET, NRC and INEE is in its **sixth week**, which is focused on tools to guarantee the continuity of education in times of crisis.

- You can check out [here](#) the recording of the webinar on the challenges to adapt the curriculum in times of emergencies.
- You can check out [here](#) the recording of the webinar on wellbeing and socio emotional skills.



Creando aula Herramientas para docentes en contexto de emergencia

DISABILITIES

- UNICEF LACRO presented in the panel on Education and Disabilities at the IV Regional Education Forum (held virtually this year) [Agenda E-2030](#).
- UNICEF LACRO sponsored the first [Zero Project Conference](#) for Latin America, the Caribbean and the Spanish-speaking community on Inclusive Education 2020, which was held in virtual format on November 18 and 19. During the conference we heard from different projects from Latin America, the Caribbean and the Spanish-speaking world and we brought together more than 60 speakers and decision makers. On the 19 we presented at the panel on data on children and people with disabilities. The panelists were UNESCO-GEM Report on inclusion, SUMMA, two ONGS and UNICEF. We organized and participated as panelist in the first [Global Digital Summit on Inclusive Management on Disaster and Disabilities](#) "Inclusive reconstruction of the World" (October 27-29).

- [A House with Many Windows Initiative](#) held in Argentina and Jamaica was held as inclusive dance workshops. Together with CONCUERPOS dance company and the country offices and their partners, children, adolescents and their families with and without disabilities enjoyed, played, and learned about inclusion in an innovative manner.

SECONDARY AGE EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- As part of the “Plan12 - Learn to transform” initiative, a free online learning program “PLAN 12: THE COURSE” was launched to promote the development of transferable skills in adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean by providing basic tools and content for the creation and strengthening of projects and encouraging young people to explore solutions to problems that arise in their communities. In collaboration with America Solidaria and Socialab, the course is currently available [online](#) and so far, 666 adolescents have been benefitted.
- Within the framework of the current agreement between LACRO and CECC/SICA, the COVID-19-related Education Contingency Plan was developed for the SICA region. The Education Contingency Plan is based on 4 main areas of work: a. Permanent updating and exchange of information, good practices and lessons learned among the Ministries of Education of the region;

b. Strengthen resources of the Ministries of Education on distance education in order to supplement face-to-face schooling; c. Share initiatives, strategies and recommendations regarding the return to school, which includes the reopening and safe school operations; and d. Jointly explore possible partnerships with international organizations. The Contingency Plan, including a set of recommendations and reference documents, are all available [here](#).

EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

- COVID LACRO (ECD, Child Protection and Gender teams) has developed a complete set of **operational tools to detect and prevent VAC in COVID19 times through phone calls** with the objective of promoting the loving and sensitive nurturing of young children while encouraging the self-care of significant caregivers in early childhood. These operational tools are meant to be used by frontline workers who interact with mothers, fathers and caregivers of children under 5 years of age through the services and programs offered by the health, nutrition, education, child protection and social protection sectors, among others. The toolkit, that is being piloted in Chile and Uruguay, is currently available in [Spanish](#) and very soon will be published in English. The tools will be presented to all COs during a **Regional Webinar on December 3rd (10:00 am Panama time)**.

5. GLOBAL RESOURCES

[What have we learnt? Overview of findings from a survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19](#) is the global report developed jointly by UNICEF, UNESCO & The World Bank in which the three organizations present the results of the Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19 School Closures. In this joint report, they analyze the results of the first two rounds of data collection administered by the



UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) covering government responses to school closures from pre-primary to secondary education.

Lastly, the global live report [Reopening Schools: Opening up better](#) has also been updated earlier this month showing the latest global information on the reopening of schools based on the six key dimensions highlighted in the [Global Framework](#) for the reopening of schools that should be used to assess schools readiness to reopen: policy, financing, safe operations, learning, reaching the most marginalized and wellbeing/protection. The report is updated on a monthly basis.

6. NATIONAL PROTOCOLS

At the national level, several Ministries of Education in the region have developed protocols and guidelines for the reopening of schools in LAC countries. You can access the list of MoEs protocols [here](#).

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