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ECUADOR: Recommendations for the Country Office to Support the Most Vulnerable Communities for Continuous Learning during COVID-19

1. Executive Summary

UNICEF LACRO requested a supplement to the Consultancy to Provide Recommendations of the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Interventions to Support the Most Vulnerable Communities for Continuous Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean during COVID-19, which was completed May-August 2020 with final updates per requested revisions submitted in an October 2020 final report. For more information, please see the final report itself submitted to LACRO.

LACRO extended the Consultancy into this project supplement (Country Recommendations) for the

purpose of taking the recommendations from the final report and separating them out by country to provide them to individual Country Offices (COs). LACRO indicated the majority of recommendations from the Consultancy's final report are applicable/generalizable to all countries in the region. LACRO also communicated that very few countries had enough data to inform detailed country-specific recommendations. However, LACRO requested that additional recommendations specific to a certain country could be added if sufficient data unique to a country was already available from the existing report and prior data collection/access. No new data was to be collected, provided, or analyzed. The following resource represents the resulting Country Recommendations.

2. Description of Resource

The consultant recommended, and LACRO agreed, that the format of the Country Recommendations be a checklist, which serves as a practical document a CO could use to take action on supporting continued learning during COVID-19 for the most vulnerable: Rural/remote learners; learners without Internet; Indigenous learners; Migrants/Refugees; Girls, and learners with Special Needs¹. To that aim, this resource offers a checklist of practical, actionable, specific, and direct recommendations for each country in the LACRO region, with countries listed in alphabetical order. All checklists include available consultancy data from the final report on a country's efforts to support vulnerable populations' continued learning during COVID-19, and the same recommendations that apply universally. Some checklists also include additional, detailed information on a country's existing efforts and recommendations unique for that country where sufficient existing data made it possible to inform such specific recommendations. For example, significant data was available for Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. In the majority of cases, a recommendation is made for the CO to pursue efforts to acquire more data on how vulnerable learners are continuing their education during

COVID-19 that is unique to their country and could be used to formulate further localized and contextualized recommendations, as well as to document effectiveness of their existing efforts and share that information regionally.

3. Guidelines for Using this Resource

LACRO will provide each CO with its own corresponding country checklist of recommendations which can easily be separated out from this resource. The CO will review the checklist items, noting areas of concern and items in need of follow-up, discussion, or consultation. In collaboration with their teams, UNICEF sector specialists, local partners, and most importantly with representatives from the vulnerable populations themselves, it is hoped that COs will 1) prioritize the implementation of at least one recommended item from their provided checklist; 2) make an action plan for implementing that prioritized item; 3) take action as planned; 4) assess the action taken, and 5) share results regionally if not globally. The above instructions for using this resource should be provided to each CO upon receipt of their checklist.



¹ UNICEF's Education Specialist for Diversity and Inclusion and Children with Disabilities (Cynthia Brizuela) uses CRPD-based terminology to refer to those with special needs as "person with disabilities".

4. Ecuador Country Checklists of Recommendations

Ecuador excels at being one of the few countries in the region where a significant amount of data was available about its efforts to support all of the listed vulnerable populations except girls (see below); in particular, there is a focus on migrants/refugees (Ecuador is part of Education Cannot Wait) so recommendations for that population may be prioritized. Interestingly, Ecuador was able to adapt the education in emergency plans it used after a major earthquake to strategies for continuing education during COVID-19. Ecuador also excels at hiring education specialists to adapt curriculum for delivery via WhatsApp so the recommendations on mobile learning may be particularly useful. The country is progressively reopening schools in rural areas. The effectiveness of these efforts should be documented and shared regionally.

For Indigenous Learners

- Multiplatform learning included support to educational television, education programs in community radios, distribution of printed material in Spanish and indigenous languages; intercultural bilingual material was printed for 240,000 indigenous students and distributed through the Ministry of Education to the territories (UNICEF LACRO Update 12).
- Educa Contigo educational video series with the Production Association for AV Materials in Kichwa language (APAK) available online (Educa Contigo).
- Plan International's delivery of printed material in indigenous languages (Survey).

For Migrants/Refugees

- RET in the region has emergency education response programs focused on urban or peri-urban areas where the mobile population is settled (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants) (Survey).

For Learners without Internet

- Printed materials, TV (Educa contigo), and radio (Aprendo en casa radio) (Gallano Report).
- UNICEF is working with the MoE to ensure that more children and adolescents have access to quality educational content through radio and television and supporting pedagogical mentors and teachers from the remedial program in the implementation of distance education. Progression to semi-onsite modality will start with rural schools where there is limited connectivity (UNICEF LACRO Update 10).
- Multiplatform learning included support to educational television, education programs in community radios, distribution of mobile equipment and connectivity to education staff, pedagogical and psychosocial orientation and support to teachers and student councilors (UNICEF LACRO Update 12).
- "A-prender la Tele", a new educational program that is broadcasted on Ecuador's television channels as part of "Educa Contigo" program from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. (Overview).
- Educa TV educational series that is broadcast daily from 15 to 16 hours on all national channels in Ecuador (UNICEF Ecuador).

For Rural/Remote Learners

- Distributing printed materials to rural areas (SITEAL).
- UNICEF is working with the MoE to ensure that more children and adolescents have access to quality educational content through radio and television and supporting pedagogical mentors and teachers from the remedial program in the implementation of distance education. Progression to the second phase of the National Plan of COVID-19, which consists in the semi-onsite modality will start with rural schools where there is limited connectivity (UNICEF LACRO Update 10).
- MoE, as part of the "Plan Educativo Aprendemos Juntos en Casa", has launched the optional

progressive return to schools of rural educational institutions of the Costa-Galapagos zones (UNICEF LACRO Update 12).

- UNICEF continued distribution of educational materials and hygiene kits to students in rural and hard to reach communities of the Northern Border, accompany teachers to conduct levelling and adapt education to multi-grade school reality in the emergency context (UNICEF LACRO Update 12).



For Learners with Special Needs

- CO is supporting the MoE in the rapid adaptation and implementation of the Education in Emergency Curriculum. The process includes the construction

of teacher guidelines for inclusive education for the COVID-19 emergency context. These guidelines are based on the revised and adapted education in emergencies guidelines for teachers that were developed in 2016-2017 as a response to the 16th of April 2016 earthquake in Ecuador. The work includes adaptation of the following 6 emergency guides: Psych emotional support; National Program adapted to the emergency; National Program adapted to play-based learning; Special Education – Community care and social-emotional strengthening; Support staff guidelines; Education leaders' guidelines (UNICEF CO & GOVT Actions).

5. Overall Recommendations

Check Mindset/Biases/Check Mindset/Biases/ Assumptions

- Abundance mindset that priorities opportunity of what is locally available already over assumptions of negativity, scarcity, and deficiency .
Ex: Consider that someone who is rural/ remote may have an abundance of traditional social networks that can be utilized to disseminate information and a girl may have an abundance of influence on younger siblings in her care that can be used to shape their perceptions of gender roles.
- Human-centered design that involves vulnerable populations in decision-making and leadership roles.
Ex: Ask representatives of vulnerable populations regarding what, if anything, they need and how they prefer to receive what they express they need, which follows INEE's Handbook on Minimum Standards for Education in an Emergency.
- Promotion of effective practices from your country for other countries to learn from and implement.
Ex: CEPAL states it is essential to share experiences and consult teaching staff and experts from academia and other sectors because there is no one-time solution for all

countries; your country's rapid, innovative, and appropriate responses to local needs could be adopted and adapted by others, and vice versa.

Improve Data Collection and Analysis

- New methods for data collection that ensure vulnerable populations such as displaced and indigenous are reached and get their voices heard as recommended by the recommended by the JIPS reference guide.⁴
Ex: Consider sending a survey by SMS text message or sending paper copies of a survey dropped and collected by a drone. Define the category labels to be used in data collection based on the terms vulnerable people use for themselves; use a combination of self-selection and language to identify those who are indigenous.⁵
- Country news report monitoring.
Ex: Scan newspaper and other media feature stories since March 2020 to find data in published stories/reports about efforts for education in emergencies for the most vulnerable including innovative ways teachers have continued reaching students and follow up with those featured.

² https://inee.org/system/files/resources/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010%28HSP%29_EN.pdf

³ COVID-19 CEPAL-UNESCO Agosto 2020

⁴ <https://www.jips.org/news/the-new-normal-collecting-data-amidst-a-global-pandemic-covid19/>

⁵ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718/PDF/373718eng.pdf.multi.page=23>

- Additional and cooperative desk reviews.
Ex: Consult with other COs, MoEs, UNICEF specialists, other UN agencies and representatives of vulnerable populations; it is common for one group not to know what the other group is doing and groups may unify efforts for a shared goal, as well as save time and money, by collaborating on data collection.
- Follow-up on novel approaches, particularly their assessment data on learning success while out of school.
Ex: Learning is challenging to measure; when learning is moved online or otherwise remote, it becomes even harder to measure. For example, receiving materials, clicking on or downloading an online resource, or playing a video do not show learning has occurred. Once school has resumed, it may be necessary to physically collect a portfolio of whatever work a student was able to complete while out of school in order for teachers to assess student learning and make fair adjustments to grade level and content.
- Differences between ages and life stage of children and youth who have unique characteristics and rights.
Ex: UNICEF specialists recommend disaggregating data, for example children 0-6, primary level 6–12 and adolescents 12-18 who each require specific recommendations tailored to them.

Choose familiar and low-tech resources already part of the lives of vulnerable populations—such as their mobile phones—in addition to already existing education via television, radio, and printed resources.

- Users' existing resources such as non-Internet connected mobile phones are more accepted by learners, do not require training to use, and are more cost-effective than imposing new, higher-tech resources.
Ex: Instead of building a web portal of online lessons which few can access or passing out tablets which few know how to use or can connect, focus more time, talent, and money on educational programs delivered via basic SMS text message for those without Internet-connected phones, and WhatsApp or similar services for those with Internet-connected phones.
- Training for teachers and parents/families on digital literacy and especially in Universal Design for Learning⁷ and Trauma-Informed Teaching⁸
Ex: Because teachers and families supporting student learning may not know how to teach under conditions created by the pandemic, are further burdened with providing socio-emotional support without training and at a time when they also need it themselves, and face increased workload both professionally and in the home, priority can also be given to their technical training (to use introduced tools in situations where learning has continued via new devices/online), methodological training (for online learning best practices

Support Inclusion

- African descent/African diaspora as vulnerable population due to higher levels of poverty related to a history of systematic racism and discrimination
Ex: Leading agencies and reports.⁶ recommended including those of African descent as a vulnerable population in need of analysis and prioritized support, and to disaggregate data by race.
- Intersectionality of vulnerable populations.
Ex: UNICEF population sector specialists, among others, recommend analyzing which risk factors and types of support affect someone who represents more than one vulnerable group, for example a learner who is not only a girl with special needs but also a refugee without Internet.

⁶ Informe COVID-19 CEPAL-UNESCO Agosto 2020; <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITB031en.pdf>; https://inee.org/system/files/resources/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010%28HSP%29_EN.pdf; https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000373718&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_7f053edb-de47-40f5-8f69-5f500dfe977%3F_%3D373718eng.pdf&updateUrl=updateUrl7783&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000373718/PDF/373718eng.pdf.multi.page=23&fullScreen=true&locale=en#p280; <https://www.unicef.org/peru/notas-de-prensa/covid19-148-ninas-ninos-adolescentes-durante-pandemia-quedaron-en-acogimiento-familiar-canastas-alimentos-cuidado-nutricional>

⁷ <http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

⁸ <https://wmich.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/u57/2013/child-trauma-toolkit.pdf>

and inclusivity with Universal Design for Learning), socio-emotional support for themselves and training in how to provide it for students and families (via Trauma-Informed principles), protected working conditions, and local teacher support networks. Lessons themselves should be designed to teach practical skills related to the crisis such as health, critical thinking and interpretation of information, etc. These recommendations support the ones provided in UNICEF's Learning Must Go On report⁹, the Gallano report¹⁰, and CEPAL¹¹ among others. As with the delivery of education to vulnerable learners themselves, teachers and families who need emergency training in the above areas can receive it faster, more equitably, and at a lower cost when delivered via low-tech solutions such as receiving training information via their mobile phones.

Expect widespread hunger and malnutrition due the global economic downturn resulting from COVID-19.

- Survival over education as a priority with schools maintaining food programs.
 - Ex: The World Food Programme (WFP)¹², UN agencies¹³, and CEPAL¹⁴ all note that even if learning cannot be continued, it may become critical to keep schools open to serve as food distribution centers and re-assign teachers and parents to the duty of organizing school feeding programs and teaching new skills to those who have lost jobs in the informal sector, many of whom will be women and migrants/refugees.
- Need for increased rural family farm food production, necessity entrepreneurship, and micro-finance.
 - Ex: Include agricultural education topics such as blending ancestral knowledge with



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modern science and technology as part of education in emergencies particularly for those in rural/remote areas who may be called upon to increase production of their family farms to sustain inventory of local markets. Also consider increased partnerships with international organizations like Heifer International¹⁵ that educate people about raising food using a sustainable, communal approach, and microfinancing partnerships.

⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/11796/file/LEarning-must-go-on.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/EI%20derecho%20a%20la%20educaci%C3%B3n%20en%20tiempos%20de%20crisis%20-%20alternativas%20para%20la%20continuidad%20educativa.pdf>

¹¹ Informe COVID-19 CEPAL-UNESCO Agosto 2020

¹² <https://insight.wfp.org/coronavirus-and-hunger-wfp-ready-to-assist-largest-number-of-people-ever-23aea919e87d>

¹³ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/forecast-2020-financial-meltdown-and-malnutrition>

¹⁴ Informe COVID-19 CEPAL-UNESCO Agosto 2020

¹⁵ <https://www.heifer.org/>

6. Recommendations Specific to Vulnerable Populations



- Continue to consult UNICEF's gender, disability, and ECW specialists as well as girls themselves.
Ex: Separate the unique needs and rights of girls at different ages.
- Employ a combination of approaches due to intersectionality.
Ex: Consider girls who are also rural and indigenous or with special needs. In the case of rural girls, they may not be able to use the provided mechanisms such as a telephone hotline to report gender-based violence occurring while they are home and out of school during COVID-19 due to lack of phone access or signal.
- Educate boys as well as girls and teachers about the difference between gender equality and equity, equality of work in the home, and gender-based violence.
Ex: Use student leadership/student government groups as a mechanism for advancing these topics; provide micro-lessons (short and convenient) knowing that girls will have less time to spend on schoolwork when they are assigned increased home duties compared to boys and have less access to devices.
- Focus on other aspects of girls' representation, participation, empowerment and learning beyond their bodies such as job, digital, and financial skills; inclusion into political parties, social, and community organizations, and positive examples of women in school lessons and materials.
Ex: Fund existing community organization structures such as women's groups, and programs that supply feminine hygiene products so that families who have lost income due to COVID-19 do not have to choose between paying for school materials and paying for sanitary supplies.



- Do no harm when protecting sovereignty.
Ex: Consult indigenous representatives themselves and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹⁶ to guarantee whether offering education or health support in emergencies represents appropriate intervention.
- Provide literacy skills in indigenous languages before distributing materials in those same indigenous languages.
Ex: It's possible oral learning via TV or radio in indigenous languages may be more effective than written materials.
- Include images of indigenous people as heroes and leaders in various professions in educational materials.
- Consult UNICEF's forthcoming consultancy on indigenous populations, and continue to consult UNICEF's gender and disability specialists, as well as indigenous learners themselves.
Ex: Consider intersectionality of vulnerable populations such as data about indigenous girls and indigenous learners with special needs.



- Continue to consult ECW reports on Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, and Peru and UNICEF's gender and disability specialists, as well as migrants/refugees themselves.
Ex: Consider intersectionality of vulnerable populations such as data about migrants/refugees who are girls and with special needs, and data on internal migrants/refugees (within the same country).
- Align recommendations to international standards on human rights for migrants/refugees.¹⁷
- Maintain school feeding and other food programs.

Ex: A majority of migrants/refugees report their priority concern is food not education.¹⁸

- Provide education on practical skills to be used as necessity entrepreneurs and navigating new country systems and deliver it via WhatsApp and micro-learning through text messages on mobile phones (forthcoming UNICEF LACRO consultancy).

Ex: CEPAL suggests to prioritize the skills and values that have been revealed as priorities at the current juncture: solidarity, self-learning, self-care and others, socio-emotional competences, health and resilience, among others.¹⁹ Migrants/refugees themselves also mention needing education on immigration paperwork, job skills, the host country school system and anti-human trafficking.

- Update school system databases to process migrant/refugee student documents/records.
Ex: School system enrollment may allow migrants/refugees to become eligible for emergency education resources provided by the government.
- Educate against xenophobia.
Ex: Even teachers require training on bias recognition and reduction regarding their attitudes and behavior towards their migrant/refugee students, particularly the false associations made about migrants/refugees and COVID-19 and women migrants/refugees and prostitution.

Without Internet

- Leverage basic features of families' existing phones.
Ex: Focus on creating and disseminating learning materials that can reach people by simple SMS text message or WhatsApp; work with local telecoms to provide these educational text message for free to learners.
- Use UNESCO's recommended distance learning solutions²⁰ many of which feature systems built for use on basic mobile phones and ones with strong

offline functionality.

Ex: A model from UNESCO's list that is applicable to the LACRO region is Kenya's Eneza Education²¹, an example of re-purposing the government curriculum to deliver it by text SMS with a teacher support hotline.

- Remember that low-tech may reach many more for less cost and require minimal training, whereas high-tech online learning platforms may be more expensive, require extensive training, yet reach very few, and only the most privileged.
Ex: Establish a toll-free telephone service or hotline, SMS text message campaign, and/or WhatsApp group where teachers can answer student and parent questions regarding their lessons; go with even lower tech solutions such as broadcasting information via megaphones/speakers from cars that drive through neighborhoods.
- Teach students, teachers, and families digital literacy skills required for using any newly introduced technology or connectivity.
Ex: Pay special attention to training/supporting younger, primary school-aged children who may be even less familiar with devices and the Internet if it is introduced.

Rural/Remote

- Prioritize hygiene education (aka WASH) particularly because these communities are reopening schools first.
Ex: Include methods for maintaining hygiene to protect against COVID-19 when there is no running water or electricity as common in rural/remote areas; in emergency situations, consider delivering supplies like water-free hand sanitizer gel which could even be dropped by drone to the most remote regions.
- Employ traditional community communication practices such as telephone trees and family buddy systems to pass educational information.

¹⁸ ECW MYRP CO Needs Analysis

¹⁹ Informe COVID-19 CEPAL-UNESCO Agosto 2020

²⁰ <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/solutions>

²¹ enezaeducation.com

Ex: Encourage the “buddy system” of telephone trees for community members who do have phone or other access to help spread the information via their social bonds and networks by calling each other systematically.

- Prepare this population for becoming leaders in the fight against malnutrition by including relevant educational topics related to the agricultural economy, scaling up food production, and business leadership.

Ex: Focus on relevant educational topics based on the agriculture economy and how to scale up food production, as well as leadership and business training for teaching others how to grow and sell food.



Special Needs

- Continue to consult UNICEF’s Education Specialist for Diversity and Inclusion and Children with Disabilities, as well as gender and ECW specialists, and the children with special needs and their families themselves to advocate for mainstreamed inclusion.

Ex: Consider the data on the unique needs and rights of children and youth at different ages/developmental stages, and prioritize early learning when preparing and supporting families with at-home child development.

- Consult the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as key planning guides
- Employ a combination of approaches due to intersectionality.

Ex: Consider data about how this population intersects with other vulnerable populations such as girls, migrants/refugees, people of African descent, indigenous, and those in conditions of extreme poverty such as in rural areas.

- Train educators, as well as decision-makers, families, and support staff, in Universal Design for Learning
Ex: Designing lessons for those “in the margins” also works for the benefit of all students; include images of students with special needs (visible and invisible) in school materials and as heroes and leaders in various professions.
- Make sure learning platforms and resources are in accessible formats.

Ex: Websites include an accessibility widget that allows learners to increase font size, contrast, etc; videos are captioned and/or transcribed; materials such as those in Microsoft Word and PDF are reviewed with the accessibility checker to ensure their inclusive formatting such as providing Alt-text to images.

