

LACRO COVID-19 EDUCATION RESPONSE: UPDATE 20

COs ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS

[Released on December 18, 2020]

1. INTRODUCTION

School closures since March due to COVID-19 have presented unprecedented challenges for all children and adolescents in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. As of December 17, schools remain fully closed in 12 countries and territories of the region, in 12 of them schools have partially opened and in the remaining 12 countries and territories schools have fully opened. The reopening process, whether it has been partial or full, has been different in each country, depending on the country-specific situation.

Since then, UNICEF COs have been consistently working closely with the Ministries of Education of their countries

to ensure continuity of education for all children and adolescents in LAC and support the reopening process of schools. The series of LACRO COVID-19 Education Responses Updates have tried to monitor the progress made in all LAC countries in such efforts, as well as to share good practices and lessons learned. With this in mind, the last update of the year, [Update #20](#), focuses on the main achievements made by LAC countries in regard to their education response to COVID-19, the main challenges they faced along the way and the next steps to take in order to guarantee continuity and quality of education for all children and adolescents in the region.



2. COUNTRY OFFICES' ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS



ARGENTINA

Main achievements:

- Rapid multimedia response (TV, radio, printed materials, website) to reach different populations with school resources to support educational continuity. 96% of households with children and adolescents from 3 to 17 years old maintained pedagogical continuity (UNICEF Survey 2020). International cooperation and South-South throughout the period.
- Strengthening of content to reach all populations (including children with disabilities), addressing rights issues and comprehensive sex education.
- Implementation of actions to reduce impact: generation of evidence on the impact of COVID-19 in the sector (Comprehensive Evaluation of the Continuing Education Process: information at the household level), creation of the Juana Manso Federal Education Platform, Federal Agreements to adapt the curriculum, promotion and accreditation regulations 2020-2021.

Main challenges:

- Large pre-existing disparities and very low access to ICT resources and connectivity.
- Low training of managers and teachers to integrate different resources and teaching methods.
- Lack of budgets to support the necessary health and safety conditions in schools.

Next steps:

- Argentina has announced several policies for 2021 to accompany the reopening: an increase in the education budget, the Programa Acompañar (Accompany Program), the extension of the coverage of the Juana Manso Platform, the extension of the Progresar scholarships and the conditional transfer program Universal Child Allowance (Asignación Universal por Hijo).
- Prioritization of teachers in the COVID-19 vaccination plan.

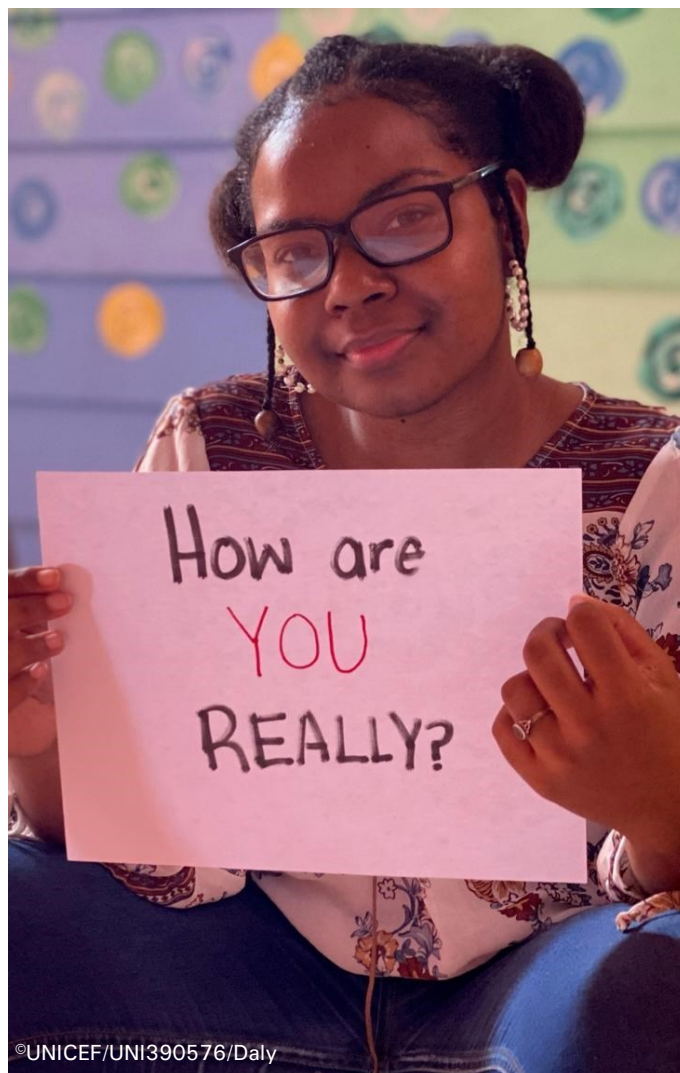
BELIZE

Main achievements:

- Approximately 61,547 students from preschool to secondary schools received access to packaged lessons, distance/online learning by teachers, with the support of the Ministry of Education.
- One initiative was implemented to keep Belize's children learning through COVID-19, to support parents with alternatives to school, while looking after the mental health of younger ones, UNICEF joined forces with the Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture and national partners, and a local television agency to produce and air the show around the country for two months, from June to July.
- 12-year-olds interviewed experts, spoke about and demonstrated topics ranging from cooking, communication and gardening to reading, math, and science. Each episode had a segment called "Peace Out" featuring school counsellors who offered psychosocial support to help relieve the stress of children and families during these challenging times. In three months, the show was watched by over 10,000 viewers on Facebook alone. Although the production has closed for a period, the show is still being repeated on local media stations.

Main challenges:

- Schools remain close due to many factors, such as a late peak in COVID 19 cases in Belize; also, it was pushed on the backburner due to preparation for elections in November 2020 and subsequent change of Government after the elections. The leader of the party in Government before 11 November 2020 was also the Minister of Education.
- Lack of access to learning due to lack of technology and internet connection for students, particularly in rural areas.
- Parents/caregivers are not able to support children due to many reasons such as: attending to other priorities such as jobs; lack of education; and lack of time.



Next steps:

- Communication advocacy plan launched for reopening of schools.
- Continued production of television/radio show, with focus on psychosocial support for continued access to learning for school children.
- Multi-sectoral approach to safe and healthy schools as an education response in the pandemic.



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BOLIVIA

Main achievements:

- More than 600,000 children were able to continue their studies through virtual education, radio or from home with the support of UNICEF.
- Over 27,000 teachers were trained in digital skills and content relevant to the pandemic.

Main challenges:

- The lack of connectivity for the most vulnerable groups was identified as a significant limitation of virtual education in Bolivia.
- The closure of the school year in August has exacerbated the backlog of 2.9 million children enrolled in the education system.
- The change of government and personnel has created gaps in the dialogue with the authorities in the education sector.

- The decision to physically close schools limited the possibility of making more progress with back-to-school protocols.

Next steps:

- Socialize with the new government the work that has already been done in terms of protocols.
- Share and socialize existing evidence and experience in countries of the region on issues of reopening as part of advocacy for opening schools.
- Document and generate evidence at the national level to support processes across the country and in other countries.

BRAZIL

Main achievements:

- The [initiative](#) “Successful School Paths”: The adaptation of the strategy to the context of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Creation of the Active School Search ([Búsqueda Activa Escolar](#)), which aimed to identify and re-enroll children outside of school in the public system.
- Development of the Educational Podcasts Let Me Tell ([Déjame contar](#)): podcast series to provide children aged 4-10 and their families with educational opportunities in the context of school closure.
- Online continuing education sessions on education and relevant issues such as gender, violence, migration, inclusive education, school health, safe school re-opening
- Development of Super Panas on the Radio, an initiative aimed at allowing children and adolescents in a migratory situation a daily moment of integration, imagination and learning while being socially distanced.
- UNICEF CO launched the 1 million Opportunities Program. A national articulation that aims to provide training opportunities and access to the labor market for adolescents and young people between 14 and 24 years, especially those in vulnerable situations.
- Launch of the [Call for the Solution](#) social marathon, an initiative of the UNICEF office in Manaus that seeks to create a local network led by young people listening and connecting for social solutions.
- UNICEF also supported the creation of three free mini courses aimed at teachers and professionals from school networks and units; health and social care service professionals; and community initiative teams and key partners in the school community.

Main challenges:

- The pandemic intensified school dropout among the poorest students.
- Increasing rates of domestic violence are compounded by the social isolation imposed by the pandemic, especially on women and girls.

- The strategy adopted by schools, which suspended face-to-face classes and began to look for alternative ways of maintaining the teaching-learning process during the quarantine, will make evident the inequality and difficulties faced by students and teachers in public schools.
- Nationwide, 39% of public schools do not have access to adequate basic sanitation.

Next steps:

- The reopening of schools is the main challenge facing Brazil's education community. While it is the responsibility of state and municipal departments to implement actions to ensure the adequacy of school environments, funding and guidelines come from the Federal Government.
- Several class entities and local governments have organized preparatory strategies for safe reopening of schools. Water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives are being planned.
- UNICEF prepared a [self-assessment panel on WASH](#), with guidance for school administrators, which is being disseminated with the support of the National Union of Municipal Education Directors. The initiative is expected to reach most Brazilian municipalities.



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CHILE

Main achievements:

- Teachers had to make their teaching strategies more flexible and modern and improve their skills in the use of ICTs.
- Improvement in the relationship between school and families as there is greater interaction and need for mutual support, as well as knowledge of the realities of each party. This has been particularly reported in initial education.
- Flexibility in the payment of state subsidies to educational centers. This is regularly done by average monthly attendance, and with pandemic has been done by enrollment.
- Flexibility in the use of preferential school subsidies for purposes such as the purchase of technological inputs.
- Incorporation of the importance of socio-emotional support as part of the educational process for both students and teachers.

Main challenges:

- The pandemic exposed a digital divide that deepened the gap in learning between higher and lower income students.
- Lack of infrastructure and adequate connectivity for synchronous or asynchronous online classes, especially in lower income schools.
- Educators lack skills to develop appropriate classes for the online format.
- An estimated 10% of students have had no contact with school during 2020, increasing the risk of dropping out. Estimates suggest that this could be 40% more than last year.
- Job stress for home-based teachers plus their parenting duties.
- Implementing a targeted curriculum and ad hoc assessments for the current situation.



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Next steps:

- Guidelines were given for the return to classes in March 2021 when the new school year begins, proposing curricular adjustments and transition phases to bring students up to date.
- Support for students with learning gaps will need to be strengthened.
- There was no increase in the 2021 budget to account for additional funds for these actions.



COLOMBIA

Main achievements:

- Promotion of the generation of audiovisual, virtual and printed educational content to support learning at home by students during school closures.
- Development of strategies that support connectivity and access to educational content for students and their families. The Ministry of National Education has delivered more than 83,000 computers to 750 schools in the country.
- Increase in funding for access to water in schools, resources to adapt biosecurity protocols and school feeding programs.

Main challenges:

- To mitigate the impact of the pandemic on school dropouts. The Ministry of National Education estimates that close to 100,000 students have withdrawn from schools during the pandemic.

- Educational gaps exist between private and public schools and between urban and rural students.
- Access to pedagogical and technological resources to support learning processes at home for children and adolescents, especially in rural areas.

Next steps:

- All schools and local governments in the country are building their 2021 education alternation plans from the conditions of their context and the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education.
- The Ministry of National Education has set the goal that by 2021 the entire education system will be working on alternation models, combining face-to-face and distance activities. This process is being carried out gradually, progressively and safely.

COSTA RICA

Main achievements:

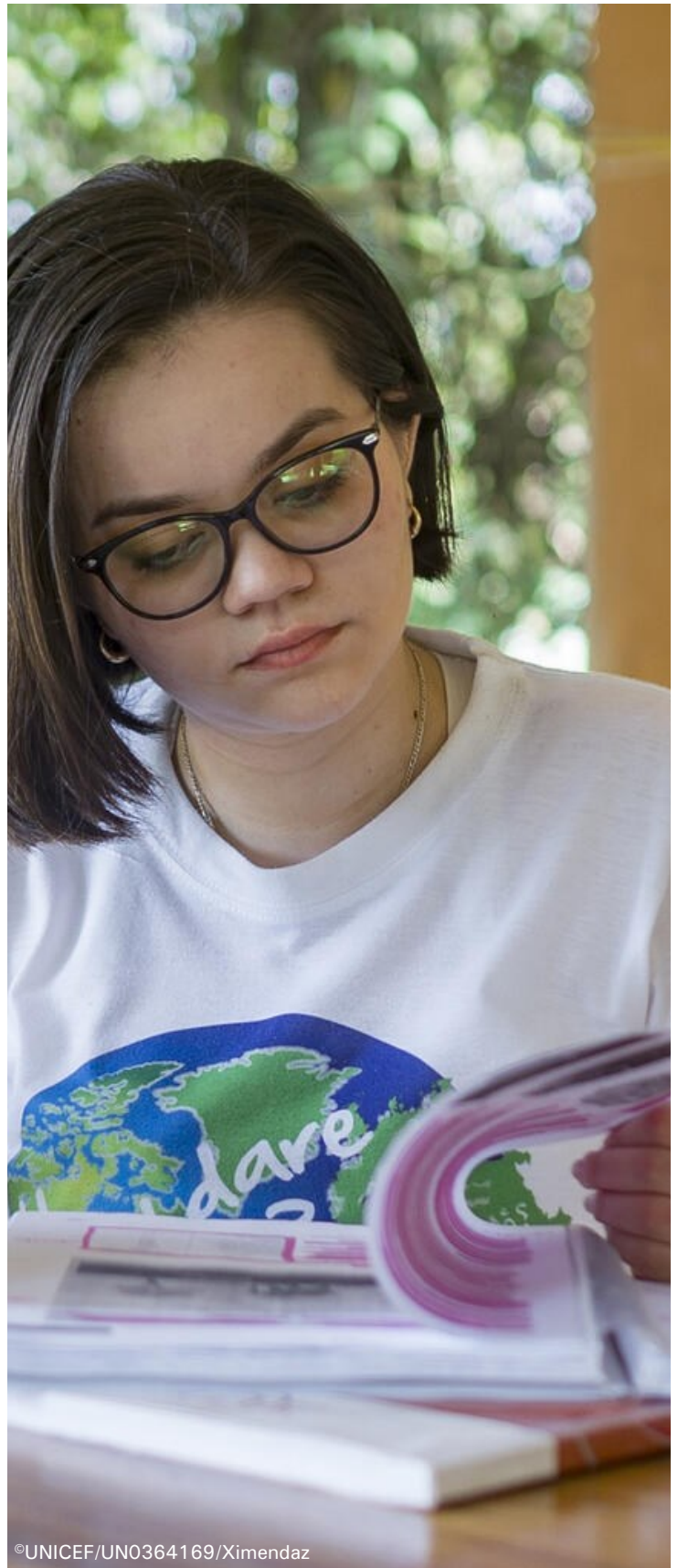
- Train teachers in the use of platforms for distance learning
- Systematically send food from school canteens to all schools in the country.
- Clearly identify the situation of girls and boys in relation to their link to education and their access to remote education systems.
- Maintain the provision of printed materials for those students who do not have an internet connection or technological devices for this purpose.

Main challenges:

- Train teachers to maintain the link with children beyond their ability to connect to the internet and access to printed materials. Attention and desire to stay in school can falter when conditions for home study are not good.
- Move from having a fledgling digital ministry platform to building a platform that allows access to all teachers and students.
- Develop a strategy to give continuity to the 2020 school year and propose another for the reopening of schools in 2021, in agreement with the Ministry of Health authorities.
- Provide training in the use of networks to almost 100% of teachers.

Next steps:

- Activate the Comprehensive Plan for the Approach to the Education Service 2020-2022.
- Ensure that the 20 protocols created for security at reopening are effectively implemented.
- Ensure that all children are re-engaged in the education system.
- Achieve the success of the curriculum leveling process for all students.



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CUBA

Main achievements:

- Establish a television grid within days of school closures for television broadcasting of classes and preparation of digital platforms.
- The plan to prepare for the reopening of schools (improvement of conditions for compliance with prevention measures, preparation of teachers, families).
- Reopening of almost all schools in the country from 1 September and then from 2 November.
- Closure of the 2019-2020 school year with the full system of evaluations and the start of the 2020-2021 school year in almost all parts of the country (95% of national enrolment).

Main challenges:

- Working with families to build trust and agree to send their children to school.
- Maintaining health control in schools to prevent infection in institutions.
- Plan to close the school year 2019-2020 and open 2020-2021 at different times, according to the territories and their epidemiological situation.

Next steps:

- Achieve the reopening of schools in those areas where schools are still closed (Pinar del Río province and the people's council of Santiago de Cuba).
- Maintain active research within the schools to avoid contagion within the institutions, in coordination with the community health areas.

ECA

Main achievements:

- Approximately 12,500 boys and girls from 0-8 years have benefitted from more responsive caregiving which supports the quality of their health, wellbeing and early experiences in their homes and in center-based environments, prior and post COVID-19.
- Approximately 3,050 parents and other key ECD stakeholders have accessed critical child development information to improve their knowledge and childrearing practices through Training and Capacity Building initiatives, both online during the COVID-19 shutdown and subsequently through face to face distancing sessions.
- A total of 42,815 students are provided with distant and online learning support, 99,878 children support for safe re-opening of schools, and 3,392 teachers are trained for delivery of online learning during the COVID-19 emergency.
- Capacity enhancement support provided to create digital repository of Open Educational Resources enabling access to online education for 28,000 students and training 1,725 teachers to support online education. OECS supported to develop COVID-19 sector response and recovery plan, completion of statistical digest, and finalization of School Counsellors handbook. Continued training and capacity support to DRR focal points through CDEMA and preparation of intermenstrual meeting 2021 to mainstream DRR ongoing. In addition, RTH Program Manual for Teachers and UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) evaluation completed.

Main challenges:

During school closures, these have been the main challenges:

- The extended national shutdown of the Education and ECD sector due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic – March–August/September 2020.
- Gaps in teacher preparation and/or capacity to deliver on-line classes.
- Lack of devices by both students and teachers to access the online platforms.
- Limited, inadequate or no internet access by students-as well as teachers.

These are the main challenges for the safe reopening of schools:

- Finding the right mix of strategies between safety and reopening of face to face classes to meet the needs of students, parents and teachers.
- Space for social distancing in classrooms.
- Addressing the concerns of teachers with medical conditions, parents and students with medical concerns.

Next steps:

- Strengthening the systems/mechanisms to support effective management, governance and coordination for integrated and equitable ECD; promoting growth and safety in ECD environments, during COVID-19 and beyond; supporting parents and caregivers to provide nurturing interactions and opportunities for quality development and learning, including using innovations/digital technologies.
- Reopening of school through training of stakeholders, development of a hygiene policy, personal protection such as masks, hygiene products, C4D campaign as part of advocacy, and engagement of key stakeholders including the teachers' union and other ministries.
- Equitable delivery of quality education ensuring Post Pandemic academic recovery; supporting access to virtual, face to face and blended education to all children where necessary, with focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged children.



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ECUADOR

Main achievements:

- The country made the decision to continue with education. In March-April 2020 there were different positions on this issue. UNICEF strongly advocated for educational continuity.
- Activation of the education multiplatform to promote home schooling, distance education and virtual education.
- Development of a three-phase education continuity plan and signing of a legal agreement to support the application of various principles of education in emergencies, including the obligation to develop education continuity plans for each educational institution with the participation of local actors and members of the educational community.

Main challenges:

- Drastic reduction of the education sector budget, including reduction of working hours and teachers'

salaries in a context of increased workload and stress for teachers.

- Addressing the unequal conditions of children and their households: lack of materials and access to online education, level of education of caregivers, increased poverty and food insecurity in households.
- Decision-making on the timing, conditions and processes of school re-opening.
- Unequal conditions for schools to consider reopening under adequate conditions and decrease of resources for the education sector to e.g. finance urgent improvements of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools.

Next steps:

- Face-to-face work by teachers and preparation of educational continuity plans in each educational institution.

EL SALVADOR

Main achievements:

- The Emergency Education Cluster was activated at the request of the Ministry of Education under the leadership of UNICEF and with the co-leadership of Save the Children and the World Bank.
- MINED's immediate response, once face-to-face classes were suspended on 12 March, was to try to ensure continuity in distance education. The Ministry developed a strategy structured in 3 phases:

1. Contingency during school closures:

- Creation of a [microsite](#) where all the educational materials can be found.
- Delivery of printed learning guides at all educational levels for the educational continuity.
- Provision of telephone lines for pedagogical consultations, provision of a 24/7 call center for emergency attention by COVID-19.

2. Integration of digital platforms:

- The launch of the educational slot broadcast by Educational TV Channel 10, "Let's learn at home".
- The launch of the radio program "Aprendamos en casa...con la Radio".
- Launch of the program "Growing up reading", aimed at early childhood.
- Materials for non-academic activities (physical and socio-emotional development) for teachers and families have been incorporated into the MINED educational continuity microsite.
- Distribution of printed educational material for students without internet.
- Development of virtual teacher training to strengthen technological skills.

3. Digitalization of education:

- Opening of the Google Classroom site, where the virtual classrooms are hosted.
- In the "Let's learn at home" educational strip, spaces for recreation, art and social-emotional attention are incorporated.
- Delivery of equipment for the development of virtual classes.
- Development of virtual education modalities, with emphasis on strengthening flexible modalities.
- Redefinition of evaluation processes with tools according to curricular prioritization.
- The Ministry of Education has formulated the Joy of Going Back to School Plan, which was presented at the Cluster in July 2020.

Main challenges:

- Identify appropriate and quality tools and materials to ensure distance education.
- Teachers with few skills in the use of technological tools and without electronic devices and many without connectivity. Teachers at high risk due to age and underlying medical conditions.
- Maintain distance learning classes considering the limited conditions of many households.
- Difficulty in accompanying students, both academically and socio-emotionally, in order to avoid dropping out of school.
- Have updated data about COVID-19 effects on the education sector for adequate decision-making.
- Redefining the evaluation process considering the prioritization of content.

Next steps:

- By December 2020, the validated return-to-school protocols, the diagnosis of the conditions of the schools and the start of cleaning and sanitation of the surroundings of the schools, as well as the teachers trained in the plan to return to school, are expected to be in place.
- In January 2021 the schools will be opened for administrative and teaching staff, and the internal infrastructure of the schools will be cleaned and prepared.
- In February 2021, students will arrive at the schools for psychosocial care and academic diagnostic evaluation.
- In March 2021 the school year begins.
- At the same time, preparation for multimodal care for the entire student population continues.



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HAITI

Main achievements:

- Support to MoE through all 10 departmental directorates to plan reopening of schools in acceptable sanitary conditions. All schools have reopened in August.
- More than 2,000 schools received hand washing equipment.
- 22,000 posters promoting sanitary protocols in schools has been printed and distributed to schools.
- MoE has put an online platform with available learning resources.
- 58,000 students received catch up classes to prepare for national exams and the success rate was around 90%.
- More than 2,000 overaged youth and school dropouts had access to vocational and professional training.

- The Ministry of Education has finalized its sectoral development plan for the next 10 years.

Main challenges:

- Low access to technology and energy for most of the students, constraining continuity of learning.
- Lack of preparation to face such a crisis.
- Recurrent political and social instability.
- Low government capacity at all levels.

Next steps:

- Support to vulnerable families to prevent massive school dropouts through a cash transfer program.
- Develop digital pedagogic resources to help students learn in case of school interruption.
- Repair WASH facilities in schools.

HONDURAS

Main achievements:

- Design of a response plan in coordination with cooperation agencies and NGOs, organization in working groups, follow-up of progress in regular meetings.
- Maintaining contact with a percentage of the students.
- Activation of the Educatrachos platform.
- Preparation of materials for television.
- Printing and delivery of printed materials to all students.
- Psycho-emotional support for students.
- Some progress in WASH to prepare schools for re-opening.

Main challenges:

- Achieve coverage for all students enrolled before school closes.
- Systematic and regular monitoring of students -in some cases it has been text messaging only.
- Extend connectivity for the platform to more students.
- Training teachers in digital issues.
- Distribution of printed materials in remote areas.
- Supporting parents to support their children.
- Evaluation of the learning - it is not known what real progress has been made by children, who has access to the platform, watched the television programs, or received printed materials.
- Plan for establishing levelling periods.

Next steps:

- Plan for 2021 in mixed learning mode, and depending on the mode, print materials, expand connectivity, strengthen the platform, train teachers, etc.
- Post-hurricane cleaning and rehabilitation of schools.

- If schools are maintained as shelters, see what options there are for using them as schools after their cleaning and rehabilitation.
- Continue to move forward with the WASH issue.
- Provide schools with biosafety conditions for the resumption of classes.

On a different note, it is important to consider that we are currently responding to the pandemic and the impact of two hurricanes.



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JAMAICA

Main achievements:

- UNICEF has donated 534 (310 of which are sim enabled), accessible tablets for children with special needs to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and is working on donating.
- The JCO also supported delivery of 1100 early childhood play and learn packs to children under 6 in quarantined zones, the development of a free online virtual instructional school leadership course taken so far by 1960 school leaders, established a parent helpline and created Public Service announcements on COVID-19 and what you can do to protect yourself including a series for parents of children with disabilities and an Instagram live with a well-known developmental pediatrician.
- The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information referenced all UNICEF global guidance in their school reopening plans disseminated system and the Jamaica CO staged a digital COVID-19 information townhall with the Prime Minister targeting youth and incorporating the use of the U-report platform.
- The office has also created a teletherapy program partnership between Health and Education and

funded by UNICEF and supported the expansion of conditional cash transfers to hundreds of families of children with disabilities.

Main challenges:

- The digital divide –both lack of sustained access to devices and internet.
- The need for increased training of teachers on use of technology-based education.
- The lack of capacity for schools to meet all COVID-19 health and safety protocols –i.e. WASH stations, social distancing, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), etc.

Next steps:

- Plans are in place to start a Return to Happiness teacher training program to start in December/January.
- UNICEF CO has finalized a Humanitarian Program Document with a local NGO, Food for the Poor, to respond to cover WASH needs (water tanks and/or handwashing stations) in 2 critical parishes targeting some 20,000 students and 19 schools.



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MEXICO

Main achievements:

- The Mexican Ministry of Education has managed to launch a distance education program that combines different dissemination channels, through TV, radio, internet, and textbook distribution.

Main challenges:

- Despite the Ministry of Education's effort to diversify the media and channels through which "Aprende en Casa" programming is broadcast, large parts of the population remain without access to the programming and it is expected that this will result in widening gaps.
- There is no follow-up and monitoring mechanism to know the level of participation and learning achieved through the distance learning programs.
- Distance education cannot replace face-to-face education. It is a one-way process, which does not allow interaction between students and teachers.
- Pedagogical mediation is focused on frontal teaching, on the transmission of content, instead of participatory education, on the construction of knowledge and skills.
- The pace and the amount of information that can be presented is designed for the average student, and therefore tends not to respect individual learning styles.

- No regular mechanisms have been established to enable teachers to maintain contact with students on a regular basis. There is anecdotal evidence of many teachers that are maintaining contact with their own resources, even though not in a systematized way.

- Little information and awareness in the population about the risks associated with the prolonged closure of schools and therefore little public opinion in favor of reopening.

Next steps:

- Distance education will be continued through the "Learn at Home" program, which is based primarily on the transmission of educational programs on TV.
- The Secretary of Education has recently announced that schools in states that have the "green light" (Chiapas, Campeche, Veracruz), can reopen in January on a voluntary basis, and following established protocols. In the states that have the "yellow light", schools can open under the "community learning center" mode, which does not mean a resumption of classes but rather voluntary face-to-face activities of pedagogical tutoring and psycho-social support.



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NICARAGUA

Main achievements:

- To have sustained active educational service. The schools never officially closed.

Main challenges:

- School attendance has dropped considerably and has fluctuated greatly over the months since the pandemic arrived in the country (March).
- Online education was never an option, because the installed capacity to develop online educational processes is limited.
- Academic and curricular development is uneven, and 2021 is expected to be a year of catch-up.

Next steps:

- The school year is closed, and the system is preparing to start the new school year in Feb. 2021.

- The school system plans to continue building capacity for the implementation of biosecurity protocols in schools.
- Special efforts are being made to improve the provision of water and sanitation in schools as a basic condition for the implementation of hygienic measures for the prevention of COVID-19.
- The system will continue to develop its capacity to conduct distance or non-face-to-face education processes, not only in the face of the pandemic emergency, but also in any future emergency.



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PANAMA

Main achievements:

- The Ministry of Education has developed a distance education plan in response to the emergency by COVID-19 with a reach of 8 out of 10 students, with new educational modalities that emerged this year (virtual, TV and radio).
- The inclusion in the vision and discourse of the Ministry of Education of the prioritization of the curriculum.
- The visibility of psycho-emotional support strategies in the response to the emergency. The Ministry has been able to propose a route of care and articulate with different institutions such as the Ministry of Health.
- The Ministry is making progress in making the most vulnerable groups visible in the crisis response plan.
- That the Ministry of Education promotes and leads the physical reopening of schools by 2020.

Main challenges:

- The little culture of monitoring and information analysis for the follow-up of educational actions both at the central level of the Ministry of Education and in schools.

- The lack of technical capacity of schools and teachers on distance education modalities and the operationalization of prioritized curriculum and evaluation.
- The lack of connectivity to the Internet or other media in poor rural areas.
- More than 30% of the country's schools have problems with water supply, which makes it impossible to provide the minimum biosecurity conditions for physical return.

Next steps:

- The definition of remediation strategies and generation of accelerated modalities for out-of-school students.
- Continuing to advocate at the highest level and launching a TV campaign on the reopening of schools.
- Generation of evidence on educational exclusion in the country in the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARAGUAY

Main achievements:

- 400 families and educators have received specific activities to continue with the stimulation and development.
- The capacities of teachers and educators have been strengthened to carry out distance education and to deepen the approaches and tools available to provide inclusive education.
- 261 educators have deepened their knowledge of inclusive education and 6100 teachers now have technological skills to carry out distance and virtual education.
- According to Ministry of Education estimates, approximately 32,500 children from indigenous populations were able to continue their learning through podcasts produced in their native languages with the assistance of the CO.
- Approximately 13,000 primary school children were able to continue their learning in mathematics and STEAM with games and development of practical projects thanks to the content package developed.
- The Red Cross and UNICEF supported the safe distribution of food kits directly benefiting 17,482 children in Asunción. The Ministry of Education has distributed food packages with its own human and logistical resources, reaching a total of 62,000 students.
- Beginning of the planning process with the Ministry of Education for the safe return to classes 2021.

Main challenges:

- The lack of planning for continuity of learning in the context of emergencies has significantly delayed actions that could have been implemented at the beginning of school closures.
- The socio-economic gaps that make it difficult for the population without access to the internet and technology to continue learning.
- At the system level, it has been a challenge to carry out distance/virtual education due to limitations in teaching skills in pedagogical tools for distance, virtual and inclusive education.
- Within the framework of the quarantine, children and adolescents are more exposed to domestic violence.

- Reach the most vulnerable communities through virtual methods due to low internet penetration and connectivity.

Next steps:

- The preparation of a safe plan and protocol for a gradual and voluntary return to classes in 2021.
- Implementation of the safe school operations guide in schools.
- Situation analysis of water and sanitation in schools for back-to-school preparation and development of communication and hand-washing campaigns.
- Strengthening of non-digital educational strategies for distance learning to reach the most remote and vulnerable populations.





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PERU

Main achievements:

- To launch a new multi-channel platform for distance education.
- Ensure the consistent inclusion of MHPSS in this strategy.
- Progressively include new goals (e.g. preventing dropouts and ensuring educational paths).

Main challenges:

- Ensuring access and connectivity: in rural areas associated with lack of coverage, in urban areas associated with lack (or availability) of devices.

- Continuity of education services in isolated and dispersed rural areas.
- Ensuring coordination (and mutual learning) between national and sub-national levels.

Next steps:

- Launch in January and February an interannual educational recovery plan.
- Launch of the national plan for a good start and recovery for the school year in 2021.



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SURINAME

Main achievements:

- Development of the school reopening protocol and successful preparation of schools for the reopening.
- The reopening of schools for the exam grades in July 2020 after school closure in March, and successfully supported exam candidates on learning loss as well as administering the exams. 90.8% Graduation rate in Primary and 58.5% graduation rate in general lower secondary.
- The full opening of the new school year on October 1st (the regular 1st day of school). Schools in the interior also reopened in a gradual manner.

Main challenges:

- Lack of ICT equipment in schools as well as ICT skills of teachers to support online learning.
- Lack of access to affordable internet service nationally.

- Existing education curriculum and content was not suited for online learning or take-home learning packages.

Next steps:

- Further strengthening multiple pathways for learning including the implementation of the UNICEF learning platform, content development and education sector strategy.
- Strengthening of WASH in schools.
- Scale-up of early stimulation and learning (ECE) program for 3-year old children.



URUGUAY

Main achievements:

- Distance education was maintained during school closures, especially thanks to the Ceibal Plan and the internet connectivity rate. This allowed over 90% of primary school students to have contact with their teachers during the closure and over 80% to participate in school activities.
- Schools were reopened early. Between the end of April and the end of June, all schools, rural and urban, at the initial, primary and secondary levels, were reopened.
- Despite the resurgence of the disease in the last month, schools have not closed again and there has been no reversal in this regard.

Main challenges:

- The main challenge has been the increased risk of de-linking, especially among students who are more socio-economically vulnerable.
- After the reopening, the gap between public and private educational centres has increased, as the latter have a greater capacity to comply with health protocols and return to full attendance while respecting the compulsory distance between students.

- One of the main challenges has been how to teach through virtual mode. Even though the infrastructure needs have been met, distance teaching still poses many challenges.

Next steps:

- Early childhood and primary education courses will end on 18 December. To evaluate students, the annual grade will be replaced by a report describing each student's learning. All students will be promoted, and the promotion will be deferred to 2022.
- Basic middle education will end on December 11 for those who have achieved promotion. There will be support and accompaniment activities between December 14 and 23 for those who have not yet achieved the performance levels. In upper secondary education, classes will end on November 20 for those who have passed. For those who have not, there will be support activities between November 23 and December 18.
- In the case of secondary education there will be a qualification, but the December exams will not be held. For those who do not reach the promotion, there will be accompaniment during the months of December and February.
- On 1st March 2021, classes will be resumed at all levels in accordance with health regulations.

VENEZUELA

Main achievements:

- The pandemic has prompted the development of a form of distance education that did not exist before. This development has meant overcoming a traditional conception of distance education and has involved the production of new digital, print, television and radio learning resources, as well as the development of community strategies adapted to the local context. The radio-based pedagogical proposal of Fe y Alegría previous to the pandemic has been the basis for promoting pedagogical proposals designed from other mass media platforms.
- "Localised education" (educación lugarizada in Spanish) has been developed which starts from the knowledge and actions of the population and seeks the relevance of learning from the local context. A child-centered teaching and learning model based on the principle of the participation of the convection of the Rights of the Child has been strengthened. In addition, the Education in Emergencies approach has accelerated a new educational model that prioritizes children's emotional well-being, healthy and hygienic habits, fundamental reading, writing and mathematical skills and the inclusion of new scenarios to promote learning.
- The participation of the family and the local community in the maintenance and continuity of school education from home, reinforcing the school-family-community triad.

Main challenges:

- The permanence of the most vulnerable children and adolescents and their educators in the teaching and learning process. The continuity of some educational modalities also requires a specific approach such as special education for children and adolescents with disabilities and intercultural bilingual education.
- Learning assessment, assessing the extent to which students are learning through different distance education strategies. Similarly, the recognition and accreditation of other new learning modes that emerge in the context of the home and community.

- Maintain services that were being developed in the remote schools (house by house) during the quarantine, such as the school feeding programs, the distribution of teaching materials, the health and hygiene programs, the biosecurity measures for the protection of the school community and the educational assistance to children, adolescents and their families through individual and small group counselling.
- Another challenge has been for the population to understand and value distance education, overcoming prejudices about the modality.
- Likewise, overcoming myths and fears about the school as a space for the propagation of the virus and its effect on the school population.

Next steps:

- A new national consultation by the Ministry of Education will take place in January to evaluate and define the reopening of schools in a full manner. This implies assessing what the partial opening of schools has meant in the last three months, which signifies a localized and contextualized strategy of progressive, flexible, consensual, safe, prioritized and adapted to the demand of children, adolescents and their families, while being focused on strengthening fundamental competencies.
- Systematize life stories about what the new school has meant for children, adolescents and their learning and highlight the learning processes that have been developed.

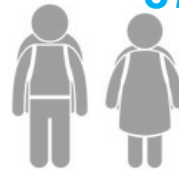


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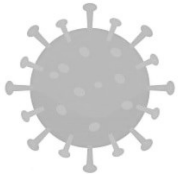
3. SITUATION OVERVIEW



12 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 **204** school days on average without **face-to-face classes** since school closures in mid March to December 15.¹



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**.



12 countries and territories in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela) 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



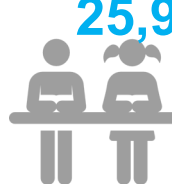
85% of countries and territories have engaged in **advocacy or communications** for school reopening.³



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](#).

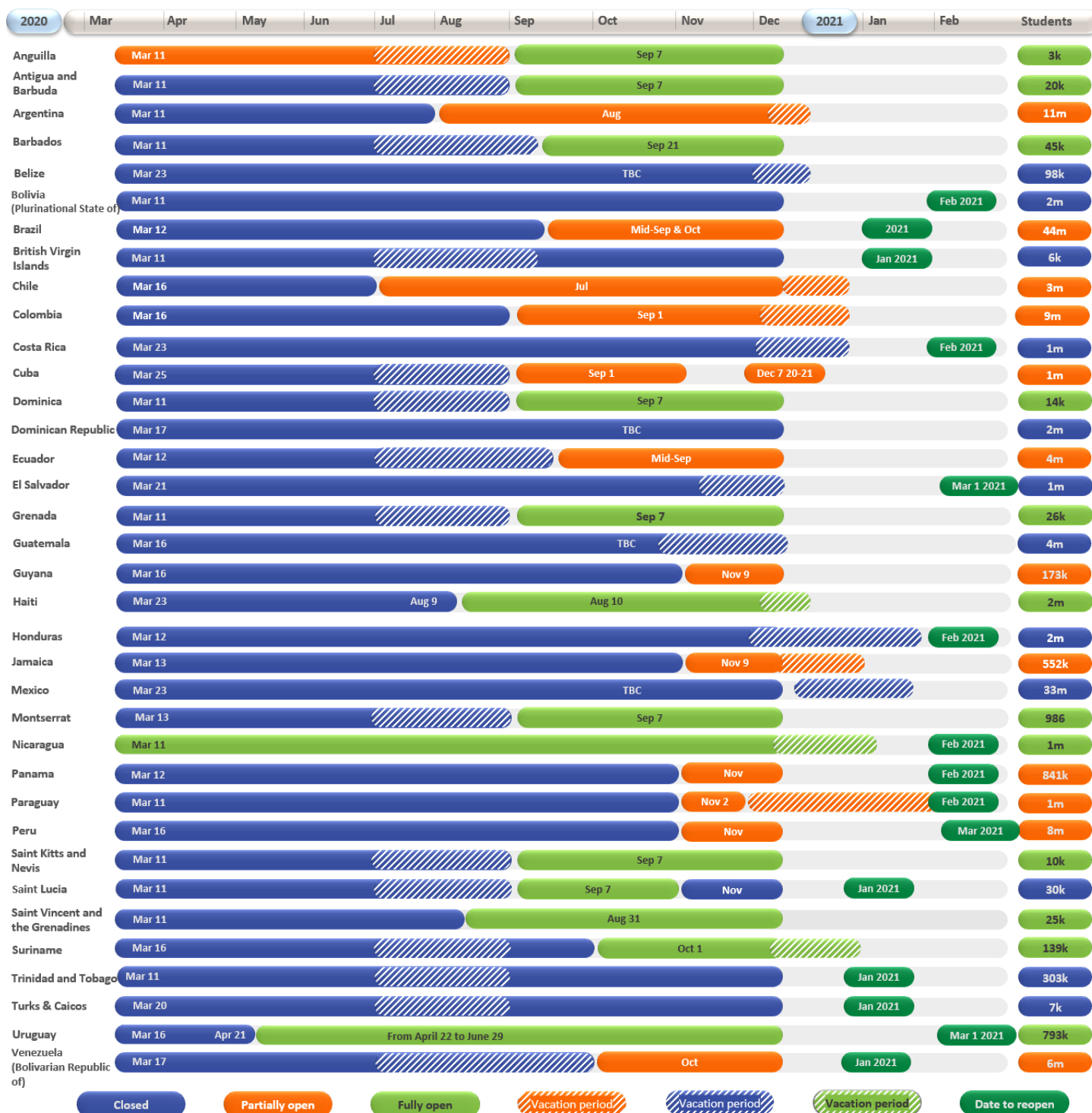
³ [Global Education Cluster, Tracker analysis Advocacy, 14 August 2020](#).

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](#).

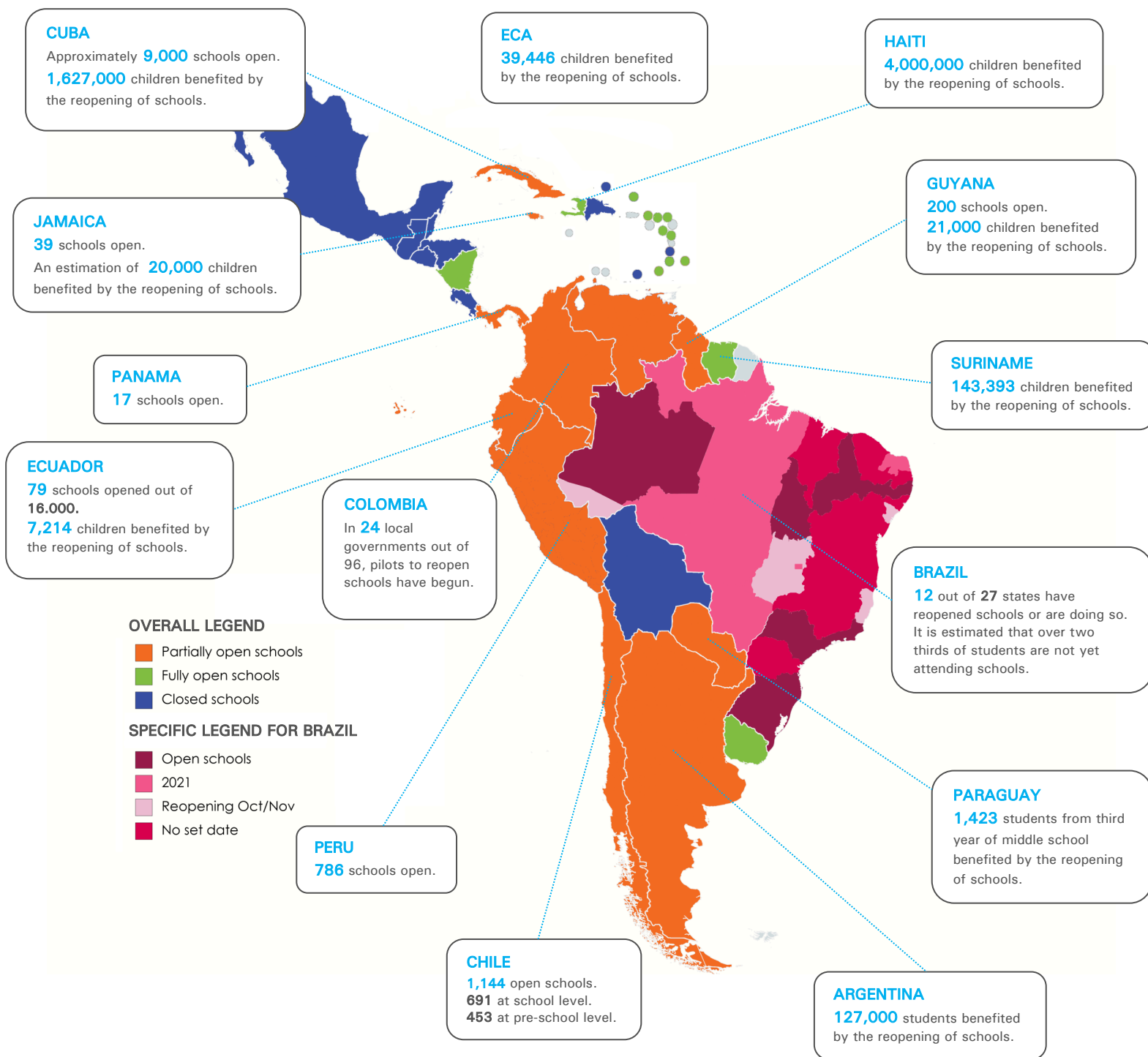
FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES TIMELINE⁷



Sources of information

⁷ Data reported by COs. Information consulted from December 7 to 18, 2020.

SCHOOL REOPENING MAP



For additional information or any queries please contact:

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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.