EL SALVADOR CASE STUDY: REOPENING SCHOOLS
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INTRODUCTION

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Reopening schools process began on April 6, 2021, and since then schools have been partially closed. There are several learning modalities: some students attend school in a semi-face-to-face manner, and others continue distance learning through various platforms, mainly Google Classroom, Google Site, the Educational Television channel "Aprendamos en casa", the educational Radio channel "Aprendamos en casa... con la Radio" and printed self-learning guides. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education established an Educational Continuity Plan executed in its different phases with the slogan "Education goes on". In addition, the "The joy of returning to school" Plan was prepared, including health, biosecurity, educational and psychosocial care protocols implemented for the reopening of educational centers. This document shows in detail the provisional and quantitative evolution of the reopening process in the country in the last months.
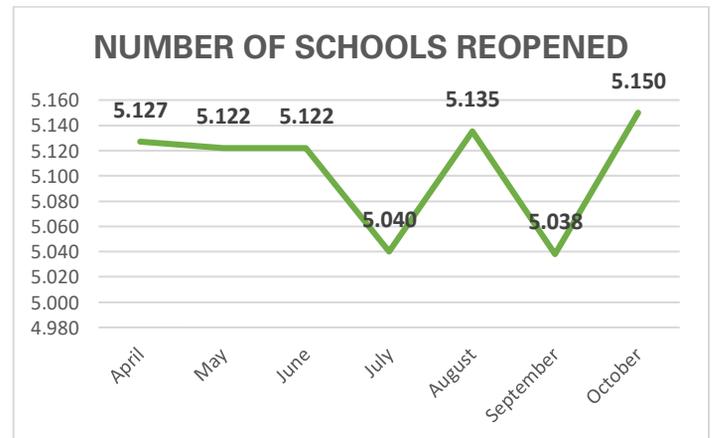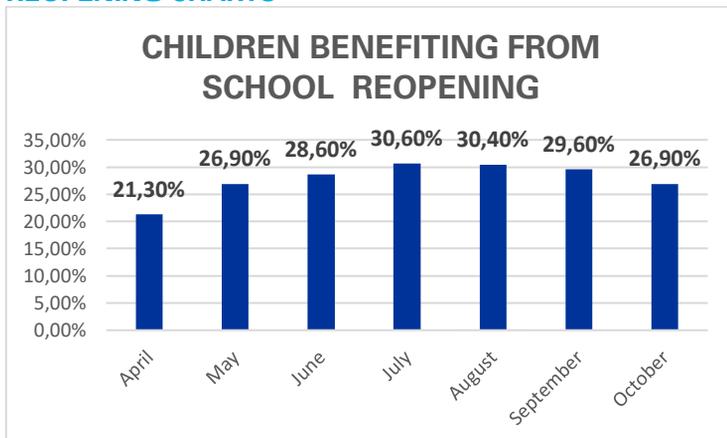
OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION[1]

- **Total number of students:**
  1,106,870(MINED,2021)[2]

- **Children benefited by the reopening:**
  30%

- **Total number of schools:**
  5,164 (MINED, 2021)[3]

- **Teaching modality:**
  Face-to-face, distance & hybrid.

SCHOOL REOPENING TIMELINE

	School year 2020											School year 2021								
	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.
El Salvador	Mar 11							end of school year					Apr 6							

Fully closed Partially closed Academic break

REOPENING CHARTS

CHILDREN BENEFITING FROM SCHOOL REOPENING

Month	Value
April	21,30%
May	26,90%
June	28,60%
July	30,60%
August	30,40%
September	29,60%
October	26,90%

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS REOPENED

Month	Value
April	5.127
May	5.122
June	5.122
July	5.040
August	5.135
September	5.038
October	5.150

Note: Data in the first graph present the flow of students in blended education, taking into account that groups of students participated in both face-to-face and online classes. In addition, only the flow of students in the morning shift is presented, the one collected by the MINED.

Source: Data provided by education focal points of the El Salvador country office between the period of April and November 2021.

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[1] Data included in this section refer to the data provided by UNICEF's El Salvador Country Office for the Regional Education Report in Response to COVID-19.

[2] MINEDUCYT (2021). "Initial enrollment year 2021". Available at https://bit.ly/33y7FA9

[3] MINEDUCYT (2021). "School Centers Year 2021." Available at https://bit.ly/3IR8rby

UNICEF ACTIONS

- Support to the Ministry of Education (MINEDUCYT) in acquisition and distribution of laptops for teachers and students, also considering children with disabilities, including technical advice on specifications, online security, training of MINEDUCYT staff in computer maintenance, etc. (the operation is carried out with government funds).

- Within GIGA's framework, assistance to government in developing a prototype with the Secretariat of Innovation for connection of 32 schools with 20 thousand students in the most impoverished areas of the country.

- Support for the strategy of education continuity and access to quality learning for children through innovative online modalities: (i) virtualization of accelerated modality for basic education (1st to 6th grade) with the Innovation Secretariat, INFOD and MINEDUCYT, (ii) virtualization of the "Soy Música" methodology to promote peaceful school coexistence and provide emotional support, with INFOD and MINEDUCYT, (iii) generation of audiovisual tutorial and training content for implementation of programs for job initiation, coexistence, family orientation and psychosocial support programs, and (iv) training of students and teachers in digital skills.

- Teacher training in psychosocial and socio-emotional support. Teacher training on self-care programs.

- Support to MINEDUCYT in the exchange of experiences that contribute to educational transformation: exchange and visit to Uruguay to learn about the work of Plan CEIBAL, whose strategic purpose is to improve quality of education by using technology in an inclusive and equitable manner.

- Support to MINEDUCYT in strengthening the Salvadoran Educational Management System (SIGES), to improve collection and use of data for school reopening and education continuity. This system includes the early warning mechanism for prevention of school dropout.

LESSONS LEARNED

- New opportunities to reach more children were realized through digitization of UNICEF's learning modalities program. While school closures deepened inequity gaps, investment in the quality of virtual education increased and these were identified as options for girls and boys who cannot physically attend school due to violence, pregnancy or maternity, among others, to continue or resume their education.

- Planning of educational interventions, a product of the pandemic and the blended learning approach being developed by MINEDUCYT, should contemplate digital skills, as well as awareness of online violence prevention and psychosocial support for the educational community, including teachers, students and their families.

- In the context of COVID-19, robust information management systems and, in particular, the early warning mechanism to prevent dropout, become strategic tools that facilitate monitoring of critical variables linked to dropout and appropriate decision making in a context of such uncertainty. Similarly, the generation of evidence is key in this regard.

- The increase in the number of schools closed due to presence COVID-19 cases reported by MINEDUCYT coincides with a moderate and sustained increase in the number of registered COVID-19 cases at the national level by the Ministry of Health of El Salvador. Between July and November 2021, El Salvador recorded about 200 cases per day, reaching a peak of 337 cases per day in September. This figure had not been recorded since January 2021.

- UNICEF El Salvador's rapid response to the need to defend the right to education of many children who were left behind because schools were closed due to health measures followed by the presence of COVID-19 and they did not have access to digital technology to continue learning, was very successful in supporting the creation of virtual content for one of the flexible educational modalities, such as Accelerated Education, which has been consolidated as an ideal strategy for the over-aged population (leveling) and for those who are out of school (reintegration to the educational system).

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