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COVID-19 and primary and secondary education: the impact of the crisis and public policy implications for Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract

More than 144 million students in Latin America and the Caribbean have missed nearly five months of school due to public health measures taken by governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The health crisis has meant a triple shock for children and adolescents, with the prolonged closure of schools, confinement due to lockdown measures and the loss of economic security in households. This triple shock has both short- and long-term repercussions that put the development of an entire generation at risk. Although governments throughout the region have implemented distance learning strategies intended to maintain a degree of continuity in children's and adolescents' learning and well-being, these solutions have been unevenly implemented and may even further exacerbate the education gaps that existed in the region before the pandemic. Addressing this educational emergency requires governments to focus on guaranteeing children's and adolescents' learning and well-being, working on four priority areas: 1) planning for the urgent reopening of schools; 2) developing a strategy to ensure learning for all students, in the new context where not all instruction will be in person; 3) preserving school's protective role and providing services that have been disrupted; and 4) ensuring the emotional well-being of the educational community (teachers, families and students). Implementing these measures promptly requires the protection of education budgets in the region, promoting cooperation between countries, and coordination between the education sector and other sectors. This crisis could be an opportunity to rethink the current education system and build one that closes existing inequalities and enables all children and adolescents in the region to reach their full potential. Achieving this will require a long-term vision for managing the current emergency, with investment in rebuilding an education system that ensures access to learning for all students, particularly the most vulnerable.

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This document was commissioned jointly with UNICEF to contribute to the public policy debate in the region, with a particular emphasis on the protection of the rights of children and adolescents.

Introduction to the series:
Evidence, Experience, and Pertinence in Search for Effective Policy Alternatives

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most serious challenges the world has faced in recent times. The total cost in terms of human lives is yet to unfold. Alongside the cost of lives and deep health crisis, the world is witnessing an economic downfold that will severely impact the wellbeing of large parts of the population in the years to come. Some of the measures that are currently being used to counteract the pandemic may impact our future lives in non-trivial ways. Understanding the association between different elements of the problem to broaden the policy space, with full awareness of the economic and social effects that they may bring, is the purpose of this series.

Thus far, the impossibility of targeted isolation of infected individuals and groups has led to policies of social distancing that impose a disproportionately high economic and social cost around the world. The combination of policies such as social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantines, imply a slowdown or even a complete stop in production and consumption activities for an uncertain period of time, crashing markets and potentially leading to the closure of businesses, sending millions of workers home. Labor, a key factor of production, has been quarantined in most sectors in the economy, borders have been closed and global value chains have been disrupted. Most estimates show a contraction of the level of output globally. For the Latin America and Caribbean region, the consensus forecasts are at -3 to -4%, and it is not until 2022 that the region is expected to go back to its pre-crisis output levels in scenarios that foresee a U-shaped crisis pattern. According to ECLAC, more than 30 million people could fall into poverty in the absence of active policies to protect or substitute income flows to vulnerable groups.

We face a crisis that requires unconventional responses. We are concerned about the level-effect: the impact of the crisis on the size of the economies and their capacity to recover growth after the shock. But we are equally concerned about the distributional impact of the shock. The crisis interacts with pre-existing heterogeneity in asset holdings, income-generation capacity, labor conditions, access to public services, and many other aspects that make some individuals and households particularly vulnerable to an economic freeze of this kind. People in the informal markets, small and micro entrepreneurs, women in precarious employment conditions, historically excluded groups, such as indigenous and afro-descendants, must be at the center of the policy response.

UNDP, as the development agency of the United Nations, has a long tradition of accompanying policymaking in its design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It has a mandate to respond to changing circumstances, deploying its assets to support our member states in their pursuit of integrated solutions to complex problems. This series aims at drawing from UNDPs own experience and knowledge globally and from the expertise and capacity of our partner think tanks and academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is an attempt to promote a collective reflection on the response to the COVID-19 health crisis and its economic and social effects on our societies. Timeliness is a must. Solutions that rely on evidence, experience, and reasoned policy intuition –coming from our rich history of policy engagement– are essential to guide this effort. This series also contributes to the integrated approach established by the UN reform and aspires to become an important input into the coherent response of the United Nations development system at the global, regional, and national levels.

Ben Bernanke, former Governor of the US Federal Reserve, reminds us in his book *The Courage to Act* that during crises, people are distinguished by those who act and those who fear to act. We hope this policy documents series will contribute to the public debate by providing timely and technically solid proposals to support the many who are taking decisive actions to protect the most vulnerable in our region.

Luis F. Lopez-Calva
United Nations Development Programme
Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean
New York, March 2020

1.   Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led governments to make drastic decisions on the operation of various economic and social activities. One of the sectors that has been the most affected since the onset of the health emergency has been pre-primary, primary and secondary education. While some economic activities have started to recommence, at the time of writing most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (hereafter LAC) have their schools closed. With the exception of Nicaragua and Anguilla, all countries in the region announced national school closures in March. By early August, only Uruguay had reopened schools at the national level, after first reopening schools in rural areas. This means that over 144 million students[1] in the region completed close to five months with no in-person instruction, facing radical changes in their learning process (see Table A1, in annex).

The prolonged closure of schools and educational centres, combined with the shock to the economy and the health of the population, has implications for children's present and future development, particularly those living in more vulnerable households. As a result of the crisis, children are at greater risk of dropping out of school and of lagging behind in their studies, food insecurity, abuse, physical and emotional health problems, and, not least, loss of learning, with potentially devastating consequences for an entire generation.[2]

Several countries in the region have implemented emergency measures to maintain some continuity in teaching and learning processes while schools remain closed. These range from using radio and television channels to deliver curricula to the use of mobile phones or virtual platforms. At the same time, countries are faced with uncertainty around how the pandemic might develop, which will determine the timings and conditions for reopening schools.

Countries in the region were already facing a learning crisis and large educational gaps before the pandemic. Furthermore, the measures put in place so far to maintain distance learning are not necessarily suitable for all age groups, as they do not adequately address the respective needs of specific groups. For example, younger children require close supervision, which they do not necessarily receive at home. Moreover, these strategies do not serve all students equally, as they depend on access to unevenly distributed resources for studying at home, such as Internet connectivity, electronic devices, space and parental support. In light of this, and with the prolonged closure of schools, it is feared that the gaps in educational continuity and achievement will widen even further.

This document outlines a general diagnosis of the situation in pre-primary, primary and secondary education in the region, the implications of the COVID-19 crisis for school-age children,[3] and the strategies that should be considered going forward to address and overcome the crisis. The rest of the document is structured as follows: the following section describes the educational gaps before the pandemic, section three summarizes the potential impacts of the crisis on students and their families, as well as on teachers and education systems. Section four then summarizes the emergency measures taken by governments in LAC to ensure educational continuity. Finally, the last section presents a roadmap that outlines the most relevant policy actions that governments should consider to ensure educational provision, prevent the widening of gaps in learning, and build a system that allows all children and young people to reach their full potential going forward.[4]

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[1] This figure corresponds to the total number of students affected by the school closures as of 10 August 2020 according to the global monitoring of school closures due to COVID-19 conducted by UNESCO (see details in Annex Table A1). This figure differs from the one reported by Unicef as of 9 September (138 million students) when some countries had reopened schools.

[2] Kaffenberger, M. 'Modeling the Long-Run Learning Impact of the COVID-19 Learning Shock: Actions to (More Than) Mitigate Loss'. RISE Insight, 2020.

[3] This document focuses on pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, which corresponds to boys and girls between the ages of 4 and 17 years. Early childhood services have also been affected by the pandemic and ensuring comprehensive care for children under four years of age is critical to their current and future development. Additionally, childcare is essential for ensuring a labour supply, particularly in relation to women. However, an analysis of this age group is beyond the scope of this document.

[4] The diagnosis presented in this document, as well as the potential impacts of the crisis and the summary of strategies implemented by the countries of the region, are based on the analysis of secondary databases, official information reported by the Ministries of Education of the countries in LAC, and existing bibliographic material. The sources used are cited throughout the document as appropriate. The roadmap presented in the last section was produced from the author's own reflections, drawing on the existing literature and discussions with other experts and policy makers who offered comments and suggestions.

2.   Gaps in education (pre-COVID-19)

2.1.   Gaps in learning

Before the pandemic, countries in the region were facing a learning crisis that disproportionately affected the poorest.[5] On average, 50.8 percent of children under 10 years of age in LAC do not have the necessary reading skills for understanding simple texts. As shown in Figure 1, the learning poverty rate varies between countries, with levels below 36.8 percent in Chile and Costa Rica, but over 74.4 percent in the Dominican Republic, Honduras and Paraguay. Moreover, when looking at levels of achievement within countries, there are marked differences depending on students' socio-economic status or place of residence. For example, data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) consistently show that students from households in the highest socio-economic quintile obtain higher grades in mathematics, reading and science compared to students in the lowest quintile (see Figure A1, in annex).

The low level of achievement, as well as the gaps, are evident from the first years of preschool. For example, while 83 percent of children aged between 3 and 4 years have an adequate level of cognitive, physical and emotional development, 57 percent of the children with inadequate development come from the poorest households.[6] On the other hand, only 27 percent of children aged between 3 and 4 years have basic literacy and numeracy skills. This figure, which is already low, conceals a significant gap: it is 30 percent in urban areas and 19 percent in rural areas.[7]

■ **Figure 1.** Learning Poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean (2018)
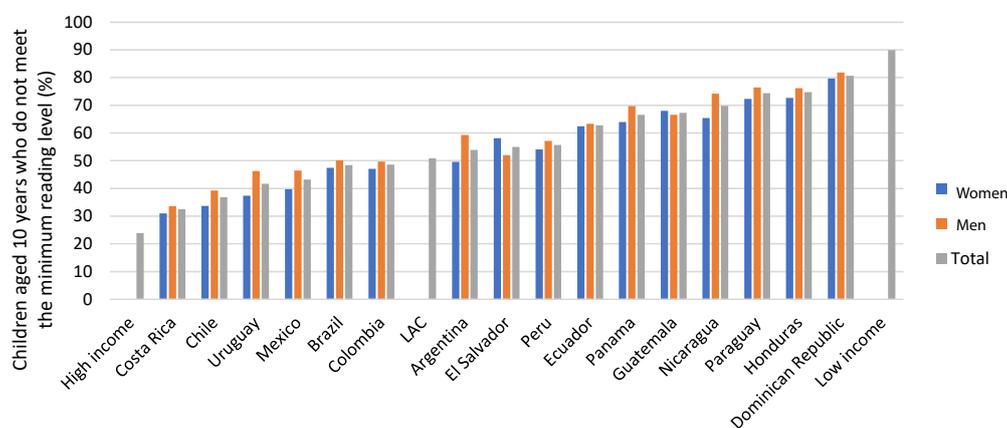
Note: The Learning Poverty Index, developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Bank, shows the percentage of 10-year-old children who do not meet the minimum reading requirement (being able to read and understand a basic text) weighted by the number of children who have dropped out of school. Source: World Bank www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty

2.2.   Gaps in coverage and continuity

Pre-primary education enrolment is fairly heterogeneous across the region. While in Brazil, Costa Rica and Uruguay preschool enrolment is over 80 percent, in Guatemala, Honduras and Peru it is less than 50 percent (see Figure A2, in annex). In contrast, most countries in the region have achieved primary school enrolment and completion rates close to 100 percent.

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5 World Bank. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018.

6 UNICEF. 'Identifying the Gap to Act: Early Childhood Development Outcomes and Determinants in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Panama: Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, 2017.

7 Ibid.

However, some countries continue to experience significant gaps in terms of completion of primary education between urban and rural areas, as well as between socio-economic status. This is the case, for example, in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, where the primary school enrolment gap between the top and bottom quintiles is 40, 27 and 23 percentage points respectively (see Figure A3, in annex).

Regarding the transition from primary to secondary education, all countries in the region, were facing the challenge of school dropout and of ensuring completion of lower and upper secondary education, particularly among adolescents from rural areas and households in the poorest quintile, even before the pandemic. The average completion rate in the region is 78.26 percent for lower secondary education and 62.16 percent for upper secondary education. This average of course conceals sizeable differences, both among countries and within countries, between levels of vulnerability. For example, while in Chile and Peru more than 85.75 percent of students complete upper secondary education, in Guatemala and Nicaragua the figure is less than 40.92 percent. Furthermore, for all countries in the region, there are consistently sizable differences in secondary school completion rates depending on students' area of residence and socio-economic status. As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of adolescents who complete secondary school is significantly higher in urban areas and those from the highest socio-economic quintile. In terms of gender differences, the secondary education completion rate is higher for girls than for boys in most countries in the region.

■ Figure 2. Secondary education completion by gender, area and socio-economic status, 2018
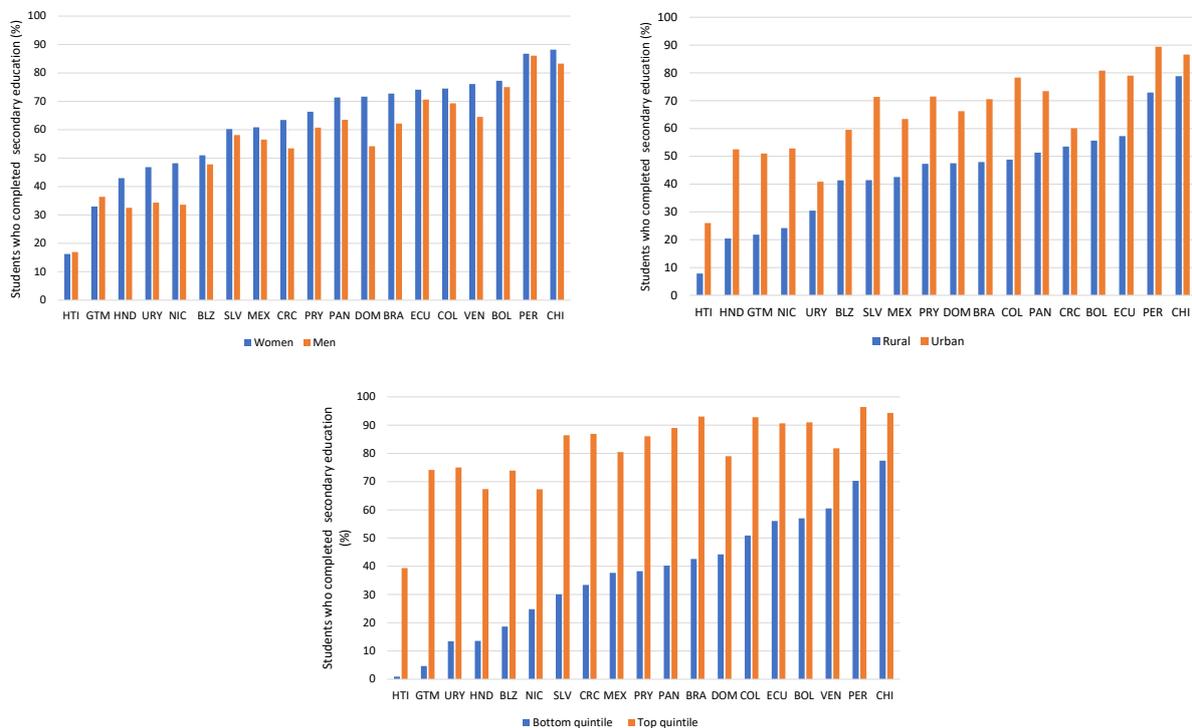

Note: Due to a lack of data, the data reported are from 2017 for Chile and Haiti, 2016 for Belize, 2015 for Guatemala, and 2014 for Nicaragua and Venezuela.
Source: Education-UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

2.3. Gaps in availability of learning resources

In the face of school closures, most countries in the region have implemented distance learning strategies. The implementation of these strategies depends heavily on children's and adolescents' access to specific resources that allow them to learn at home: availability of books and educational materials at home, availability of a place to study, access to electronic devices and connectivity, and parental support and involvement in the learning process.[8] As shown below, LAC faces a strong inequity in the resources that are necessary for creating conditions that are conducive to learning at home.

The PISA data makes it possible to examine the gaps in educational resources reported by students themselves in some of the countries in the region. According to data from 2018, on average 76.1 percent of 15-year-old students have a space to study at home and 67 percent have a desk. Figure 3 shows access to such spaces according to households' socio-economic status. As can be seen, less than 73.6 percent of adolescents from households in the poorest quintile have a space to study at home (compared to more than 86.8 percent in the top quintile), and, with the exception of Mexico and Peru, less than 57.6 percent have access to a desk (compared with 76.6 percent or more in the top quintile).

■ **Figure 3.** Space at home by socio-economic status
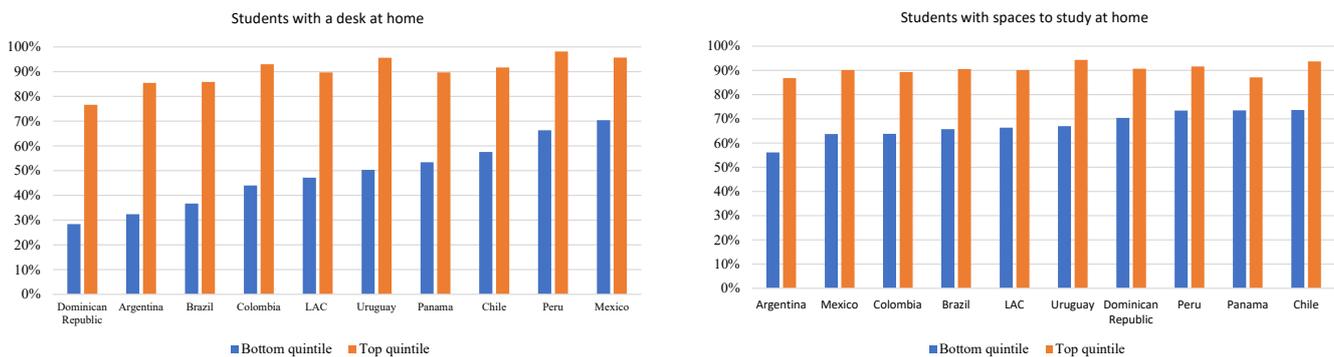
Note: Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of assets in students' households. These assets include a private room, Internet connection, television, car, en suite rooms, a mobile phone with Internet access, computer, tablet, digital books, and three wealth assets related to each country. Only countries in LAC are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs. Data source: PISA 2018.

With regard to access to electronic devices, 62 percent have a computer for study and 45.6 percent have a tablet at home. As with the previous data, there is significant variation between countries, particularly in access to computers: while in Chile, 83 percent of 15-year-old students have a computer for study, in Mexico, Panama and Peru, this percentage is less than 54 percent, and in the Dominican Republic it is 40.5 percent. The socio-economic differences with regards to access to a computer or tablet for home study are appalling: as shown in Figure 4, for all Latin American countries with available data, the probability that a student belonging to a household in the highest quintile will have a computer for study is 5.5 times greater (or more) than those in the lowest quintile, and the differences in terms of tablet ownership are even greater (8 to 1). However, access to a mobile phone with Internet at home is substantially greater, at over 81.9 percent in all countries, and close to 100 percent in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Although there are differences depending on socio-economic status, these are less acute than those observed in access to a computer.[9] However, having a mobile phone with data at home does not guarantee students' access to the Internet for their academic activities. The average Internet coverage in the region is 68 percent, again with high heterogeneity: from coverage of less than 50 percent in Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua (33 percent, 42 percent and 47 percent respectively), to coverage of more than 80 percent in Saint Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla,

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[8] Brossard, M. and others. 'Parental Engagement in Children's Learning: Insights for remote learning response during COVID-19'. Innocenti Research Briefs, No. 2020-09. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, 2020.

[9] It is important to clarify that this figure corresponds to students' reports regarding access to a mobile phone with Internet at home. However, this does not factor in the quality of Internet access, either in terms of the stability of the connection or access to a data plan.

Barbados, Chile, the Virgin Islands, and the Bahamas.[10] These figures include access via mobile devices. Bearing in mind that it is preferable to have a computer or tablet to make adequate use of digital educational resources, the percentage of students with Internet access from such devices is even lower (39 percent, on average), and is no higher than 55 percent in any country in the region.

Finally, access to television is close to 100 percent in countries in the region, with the exception of Panama and Peru, where 90.7 percent and 94.3 percent of students, respectively, report having a television at home. Additionally, there are differences in television ownership according to socio-economic status, but these are substantially smaller than those observed for other electronic devices. These inequalities contribute to widening learning gaps, as it is the most vulnerable children and adolescents who have the fewest resources to continue learning at home.

■ **Figure 4.** Access to electronic devices at home by socio-economic status
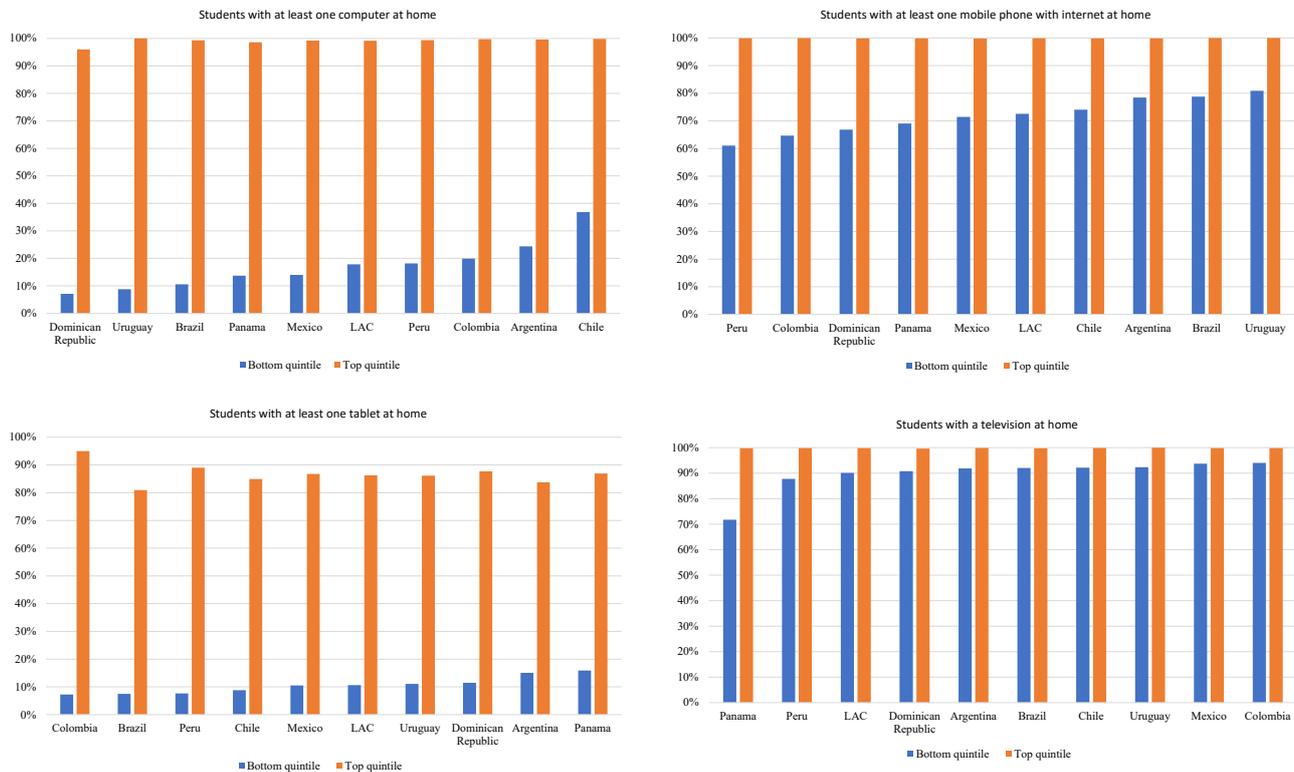
Note: Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of assets in students' households. These assets include electronic goods and the number of rooms in the house, among other things. Only countries in LAC are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs. Data source: PISA 2018.

An environment that facilitates learning at home involves support from caregivers, particularly for younger children.[11] Consolidated UNICEF data show that 75 percent of children aged 3 to 4 years can access some form of learning activity by an adult in the household.[12] However, this is less common among children whose mothers have low educational attainment (60 percent), children in poor households (62 percent) and children in rural areas (65 percent). Furthermore, 48 percent of

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10 Data Reportal

11 Castro, M. and others. Parental involvement on student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. Educational Research Review, vol. 14, 33–46 (February 2015).

12 UNICEF. 'Identifying the Gap to Act: Early Childhood Development Outcomes and Determinants in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Panama: Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, 2017.

children in this age range do not have books at home. As for older children, given that we do not have detailed information on parental involvement for all the countries in the region, we can instead use parental level of education as a proxy for the quality of parental involvement and support.[13] As with other learning resources, parental education is unequally distributed: children and adolescents from the poorest households have parents with significantly lower levels of education than those from households in the top quintile (see Figure A4, in annex). This suggests that there are gaps in the type of support that parents can offer their children in their learning process.

The PISA data allow us to measure the gaps in parental involvement for 15-year-old students in some countries in the region. Figure 5 shows the index of parental involvement for some countries in the region in relation to the average for countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (according to PISA data from 2018). This index measures how often parents enquire about their children's school life, and how much help they offer in the learning process. Two main findings stand out: firstly, in Brazil and Chile levels of parental involvement are below the OECD average, while the Dominican Republic and Panama have above average levels of parental involvement. Secondly, with the exception of Panama, differences in the level of parental involvement according to the household's socio-economic status are enormous: between 10.4 and 22.6 times lower for the poorest quintile compared with the top quintile.

■ **Figure 5.** Index of parental involvement in home learning, by gender and socio-economic status
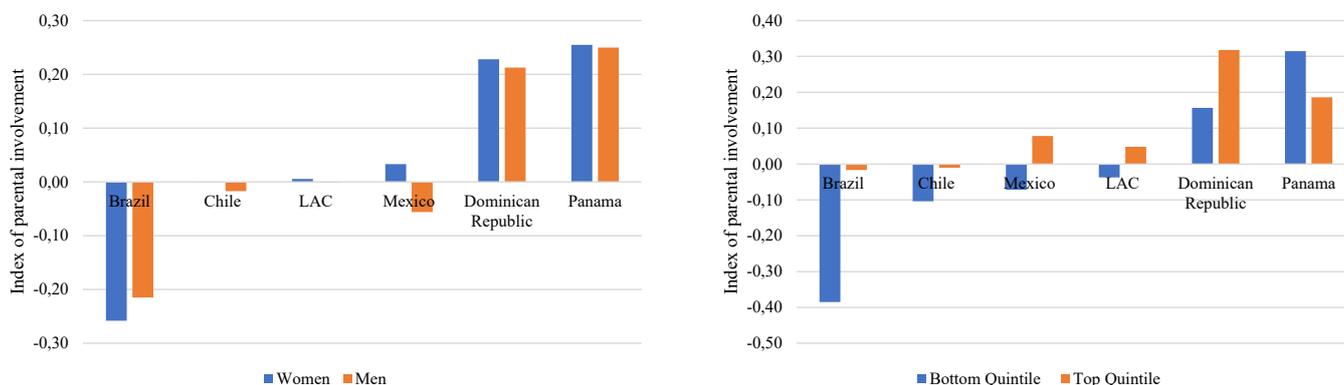

Note: This index contains the frequency with which parents performed the following activities with the student: discussing how the student has done in school, eating with the child at the table, taking time to talk, helping with science homework, asking how the student has performed in science classes, obtaining materials for science classes, discussing how science is used in everyday life, and discussing science-related career pathways. Positive values for this index show that they are above the average for OECD countries. Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of resources in students' households. These assets include electronic goods and the number of rooms in the house, among other things. Only countries in LAC are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs. Data source: PISA 2018.

Finally, the PISA data allow us to measure the level of parental emotional support for a wider group of countries. This index measures to what extent parents support their children emotionally in their school activities. As shown in Figure 6, while Chile, Mexico and Uruguay have above average levels for OECD countries, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Panama and Peru are below this average. Looking at gender differences, there is a higher level of support for girls than for boys, and a significantly lower level for adolescents in households belonging to the poorest quintile. In fact, in all the Latin American countries observed, the index is below the OECD average for students in households from the lowest quintile and above the average for students in households from the highest quintile, reflecting once again the profound inequities that children and adolescents face in the region.

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[13] Boonk, L. and others. 'A review of the relationship between parental involvement indicators and academic achievement'. Educational Research Review, vol. 24, 10–30 (June 2018); Kohl, G. O., L. J Lengua, and R. J. McMahon. 'Parent involvement in school: Conceptualizing multiple dimensions and their relations with family and demographic risk factors'. Journal of School Psychology, vol. 38, Nº. 6, 501–523 (November 2000); Li, X., and others. 'Family socioeconomic status and home-based parental involvement: A mediation analysis of parental attitudes and expectations'. Children and Youth Services Review, vol. 116 (September 2020). doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105111.

■ **Figure 6.** Index of parental emotional support, by gender and socio-economic status
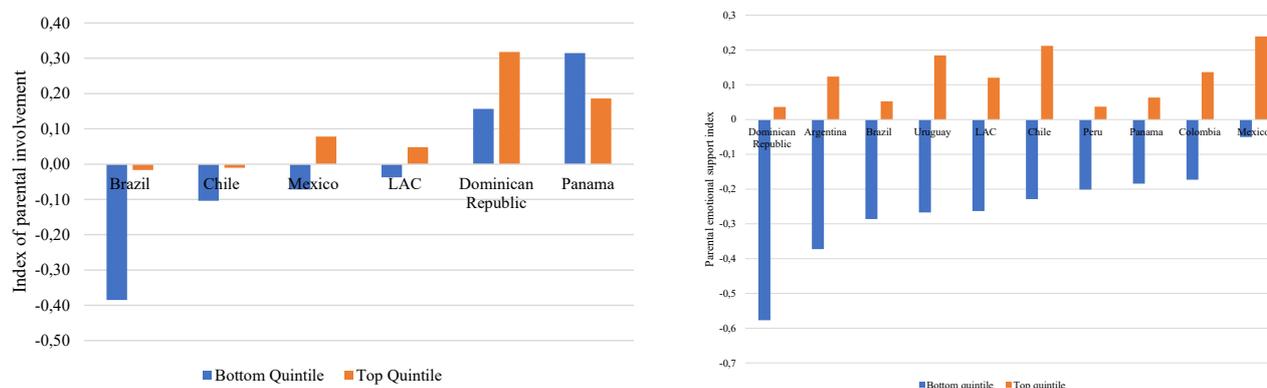
Note: This index contains information about how much parents agree with the following statements: I am interested in my child's school activities, I support his/her efforts and achievements, I offer support when my child has difficulties in school, I try to make my child feel safe. Positive values for this index indicate that they are above the average for OECD countries. Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of assets in students' households. These assets include electronic goods and the number of rooms in the house, among other things. Only countries in LAC are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs.

3. Potential impacts of the crisis on the primary and secondary education system

The COVID-19 pandemic has had three negative effects on children and adolescents: the abrupt closure of schools, confinement due to the lockdown measures taken by most governments, and a global economic recession. These negative effects have short- and long-term repercussions that directly impact children and adolescents, as well as their families, teachers and education systems. As summarized below, these negative effects have an even greater impact on the most vulnerable children and adolescents. It is therefore necessary to take action to prevent the educational gaps that existed prior to the pandemic (as described in the previous section) from becoming even wider.

3.1. On students and families

The first direct impact on students is the disruption and possible learning loss due to prolonged school closures. Prolonged interruptions of classes due to long school breaks or teachers' strikes cause substantial losses in learning, particularly for children and adolescents from more vulnerable households who do not have the resources to compensate for these interruptions.[14] Moreover, evidence from natural disasters and epidemics has shown that school closures can have long-term negative effects on learning. For example, the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan caused schools to close for an average period of 14 weeks, leading to a learning loss for students equivalent to approximately 1.5 years of schooling.[15] This loss was more severe among the most vulnerable students whose mothers had not completed primary education.[16] While in the current crisis students have access to some form of distance learning, access to and the quality of this education depends on the availability of learning resources at home. As shown in the previous section, these resources are unevenly distributed throughout countries in the region, meaning that the most vulnerable children and adolescents are at high risk of learning losses. This was the case in Sierra Leone during the Ebola epidemic, where children in rural areas did not have access to television or radio and were therefore unable to access distance learning strategies.[17] While there are still no estimates on

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[14] Busso, M., and J. Camacho. 'Pandemic and Inequality: How Much Human Capital Is Lost When Schools Close?' Ideas Matter. Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

[15] This loss was not due solely to school closures, but also to post-return dynamics, with affected students showing lower levels of learning progress in the years following their return to school. The authors suggest that one possible explanation for this is that students were moved up a grade without having satisfied the relevant learning outcomes, and that teaching at a level above students' actual level may cause gaps to increase.

[16] Andrabi, T., B. Daniels, and J. Das. 'Human Capital Accumulation and Disasters: Evidence from the Pakistan Earthquake of 2005'. RISE Working Paper Series, No. 20/039, 2020.

[17] Risso-Gill, I., and L. Finnegan. 'Children's Ebola Recovery Assessment: Sierra Leone'. Save the Children, World Vision International, Plan International and UNICEF, 2015.

the effect of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic in LAC, recent evidence from the United States has shown that, following school closures between March and May, students in low-income households lost 36 percent in their math learning, while those in high-income households improved learning by 45.5 percent.[18] A possible explanation for this disparity is that low-income students have lower levels of participation in online courses and receive lower levels of parental support for academic work at home, as described in the previous section.

In addition to being spaces for learning, schools serve as protective spaces for many students. By being in daily contact with students, teachers and school staff play a protective role against possible threats to students' physical and mental safety at home and can alert the authorities in the event of violence or abuse. School closures, combined with children and adolescents being confined to their homes and the pressure the deteriorating economic situation puts on parents, increase the risk of violence and maltreatment.[19] [20] This was the case in Africa during the Ebola epidemic, where rates of child abuse and maltreatment increased significantly. Also, recent evidence from China related to the COVID-19 pandemic showed that reports of domestic violence tripled during quarantine.[21] For LAC, there is evidence that a third of young people between 13 and 17 years of age reported being the victims of physical assaults during the months following the hurricane that hit Haiti in 2011.[22] Additionally, in countries affected by conflict where armed groups are present, such as Colombia,[23] adolescents have been at greater risk of being recruited by these groups.

Evidence from previous humanitarian crises indicates that girls and female adolescents are at greater risk of pregnancy during such crises. The health crisis in Africa caused by the Ebola epidemic increased teenage pregnancy rates. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example, pregnancy rates increased as the epidemic spread.[24] [25] These studies suggest some explanations for this increase. On the one hand, mobility restrictions reduced the use of contraceptives.[26] It has also been suggested that, as schools served as safe spaces, school closures exposed female adolescents to situations of risk.

A fourth impact of the pandemic on children and adolescents is increased food insecurity. The economic downturn is directly linked to a decrease in household consumption. This decrease puts children's and adolescents' nutritional needs at risk. Additionally, school closures frequently disrupt school feeding programmes. According to FAO, 85 million children in LAC make use of school feeding programmes, and for 10 million of them, school feeding is their main source of food.[27]

Another negative effect of the current crisis on children and adolescents is the triggering of mental health problems. Previous natural disasters in LAC, such as hurricanes or earthquakes, have affected children's mental health.[28] In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a survey of secondary school students in Ecuador reported that 16 percent of respondents had symptoms of depression.[29] This is consistent with observations from large-scale emergency or disaster situations, where

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[18] This finding, published by Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker, is based on a sample of schools in the United States that use Zearn Math as part of their mathematics curriculum. While not a representative sample, it does give an indication of the potential differential effects the pandemic could have on learning.

[19] Golberstein, E., H. Wen, and B.F. Miller. 'Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Mental Health for Children and Adolescents'. JAMA Pediatrics, vol. 174, No. 9 (April 2020).

[20] Risso-Gill, I., and L. Finnegan. 'Children's Ebola Recovery Assessment: Sierra Leone'. Save the Children, World Vision International, Plan International and UNICEF, 2015.

[21] Lee, J. 'Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19'. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, vol. 4, Nº. 6, 421 (April 2020).

[22] Flynn-O'Brien, K.T., and others. 'Prevalence of physical violence against children in Haiti: A national population-based cross-sectional survey'. Child abuse & neglect, vol. 51, 154–162 (January 2016).

[23] Bulletin 341 Procuraduría General de la Nación (Attorney General's Office), Bogotá.

[24] Rothe, D., and others. Ebola: beyond the health emergency. Plan International, 2015.

[25] UNECA. 'Socio-economic impacts of Ebola on Africa'. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2015.

[26] Denney, L., R. Gordon, and A. Ibrahim. 'Teenage Pregnancy after Ebola in Sierra Leone'. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium Working Paper, No. 39. London: Overseas Development Institute, 2015.

[27] FAO. 'FAO Warns of the Impact of COVID-19 on School Feeding in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, 2020.

[28] Carreño, M. E., T. A. Zambrano Cobeña, and K. J. Joza Carreño. 'Comprehensive welfare of children who were exposed to the earthquake of April 16th 2016 in Ecuador'. FACSA-LUD-UNEMI, vol. 3, No. 5, 23–30 (December 2019);
Felix, E., and others. 'Family influences on the long term post-disaster recovery of Puerto Rican youth'. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, vol. 41, No. 1, 111–124 (January 2013); Santiesteban, Y., and others. 'Impact of Gustav and Ike hurricanes crossing on the psychological health of a group of affected schoolchildren'. Revista cubana de medicina general integral (Cuban Journal of General Comprehensive Medicine), vol. 26, No. 3 (July–September 2010).

[29] Asanov, I., and others. 'Remote-learning, Time-Use, and Mental Health of Ecuadorian High-School Students during the COVID-19 Quarantine'. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 9252. Ecuador: World Bank, 2020.

significant increases in depression, stress, anxiety and substance use are just some of the results that have been observed.[30] This negative effect on mental health results from various processes triggered by, for example, lockdown measures and school closures. Children can experience stress and anxiety disorders when exposed to long periods of isolation.[31] Simultaneously, lockdown measures have distanced children from people who can offer them emotional support and from mental health services.[32] Additionally, children's usual routines have changed during these school closures, affecting their psychosocial stress levels.[33] Many children have also lost access to care, given that schools are children's main point of access to mental health detection and care, especially for those belonging to the most vulnerable social groups.[34]

Finally, the pandemic has affected various dimensions of families' well-being, which in turn impacts children's and adolescent's development. The measures taken by governments have forced various economic activities to cease, with job and income losses for millions of families. It is estimated that the poverty rate will increase by at least 14.5 percent in LAC, which would mean a further 28.7 million more people living in poverty.[35] This abrupt loss of household income will put pressure on children, especially adolescents, to abandon their studies – not only because of the cost of education, but also due to the need to bring income into the household. In fact, it is estimated that between 109,000 and 326,000 children and adolescents could enter the labour market as a result of the pandemic.[36]

In addition to the economic impact on households, there is the public health situation. As the COVID-19 case curve drops,[37] families are exposed to the possible infection of a household member and face uncertainties regarding their own health. The combination of these two factors (economic and health), added to the uncertainty and lockdown, results in high levels of uncertainty and isolation among caregivers, which can have a negative effect on their parenting practices. For example, parents have to focus their attentions on handling these emergencies, meaning they have less time and mental resources to support their children in their academic work or to offer the emotional support children need to cope with the change in their daily lives.[38] Furthermore, the high stress levels at home caused by economic difficulties can trigger levels of toxic stress that jeopardize children's and adolescents' cognitive and emotional development.[39]

To summarize, without immediate intervention, the triple combination of school closures, economic recession and extended lockdown may have negative effects on children's and adolescents' physical, cognitive and emotional development. These negative effects on learning, nutrition and emotional health may have medium- and long-term consequences,[40] which could jeopardize a generation's full development.

30 Neria, Y., A. Nandi, and S. Galea. 'Post-traumatic stress disorder following disasters: a systematic review'. Psychological medicine, vol. 38, No. 4, 467–480 (April 2008); Papadatou, D., and others. 'Adolescents' reaction after a wildfire disaster in Greece'. Journal of Traumatic Stress, vol. 25, No. 1, 57–63 (February 2012); Thienkrua, W. and others. 'Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among children in tsunami-affected areas in southern Thailand'. JAMA, vol. 295, No. 5, 549–559 (August 2006).

31 Sprang, G., and M. Silman. 'Post-traumatic stress disorder in parents and youth after health-related disasters'. Disaster Medicine Public Health Preparedness, vol. 7, No. 1 (February 2013).

32 Espada, J. P., and others. 'Las Buenas Prácticas en la Atención Psicológica Infanto-juvenil ante el COVID19' (Good practices in psychological care for children and young people in the context of COVID-19). Clínica y Salud, vol. 31, No. 2 (July 2020).

33 Wang, C., and others. 'Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 Coronavirus disease epidemic among the general population in China'. International Journal of Environment, Research and Public Health, vol. 17, No. 5, 1729 (March 2020); Wang, G., and others. 'Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak'. The Lancet, vol. 395, No. 10228, 945–947 (March 2020).

34 Bruns, B., and J. Luque. Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2015.

35 ECLAC. 'Measuring the impact of COVID-19 with a view to reactivation'. COVID-19 Special Report, No. 2. Santiago de Chile: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020.

36 ECLAC and ILO. 'The COVID-19 pandemic could increase child labour in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Technical Note, Nº. 1. Santiago de Chile: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Labour Organization, 2020.

37 At the time of writing, as of 22 July 2020, Latin America is the epicentre of the pandemic, with more than 4 million confirmed cases.

38 Golberstein, E., H. Wen, and B. F. Miller. 'Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Mental Health for Children and Adolescents'. JAMA Pediatrics, vol. 174, No. 9 (April 2020).

39 Shonkoff, J. P., and P. Levitt. 'Neuroscience and the Future of Early Childhood Policy: Moving from Why to What and How'. Neuron, vol. 9, No. 5, 689–691 (September 2010); Wadsworth, M. E., and L. E. Berger. 'Adolescents Coping with Poverty-Related Family Stress: Prospective Predictors of Coping and Psychological Symptoms'. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, vol. 35, No. 1 (March 2006).

40 Clark, H., and others. 'A future for the world's children? A WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission'. The Lancet, vol. 395, Nº. 10224, 605–658 (February 2020).

While the extent of the loss in human development, in all its dimensions, is still uncertain, recent estimates suggest that there will be a significant decline not only in the cumulative years of education but also in learning achievements. Simulations for LAC show that the percentage of secondary education students with reading levels below the minimum proficiency could increase from 53 percent to 68 percent if schools remain closed for seven months. If the risk of dropping out of school is added to the learning gap, it is estimated that, on average, between 0.6 and 0.9 years of schooling (adjusted for quality) will be lost as a result of closures of five or seven months respectively. This equates to a reduction in income of between US$9,750 and $15,229 per student. Without strategies for catching up on missed learning and preventing dropouts, these losses equate to between $0.8 trillion and $1 trillion for LAC.[41]

Unequal access to essential learning resources and to high-quality distance learning methods means that losses in human capital are concentrated in the most vulnerable groups: children and young people in rural areas with low levels of connectivity and who therefore have access to less effective distance learning modalities; children in poor households who struggle to have their basic nutritional needs met, do not necessarily have an adequate study space, or those who live in areas with internet access yet do not have the electronic devices necessary to access distance learning delivered via digital tools; children in single-parent households or households with low parental educational attainment where parents cannot provide support or a favourable environment for studying.[42] Furthermore, children from indigenous populations and those with disabilities will also be disproportionately affected, as distance learning solutions do not always support their language or learning needs. There is, therefore, a need to focus efforts on ensuring continuity of learning for the most vulnerable children and young people.

3.2.   Effects on teachers and education systems

Teachers, like other adults and workers, have been emotionally affected by the lockdown and the public health crisis in general.[43] Furthermore, teachers in several countries have continued their work from home and, in many cases, their workload has increased. This is partly because they do not have sufficient training to design and implement remote learning strategies (which will be discussed below), and partly because of the additional effort demanded by home working during an emergency situation in which they must also attend to their own caring responsibilities.[44] [45] This poses a challenge to education systems in terms of ensuring that teachers maintain the physical and mental well-being needed to continue their work from home or to collaborate in the process of reopening schools.

Additionally, if schools reopen, it is uncertain whether the full teaching workforce will be available to work in a classroom setting, given that a significant proportion of them are in the age range at greatest risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 infection.[46] Furthermore, in several countries in the region, teachers have expressed fears of returning to schools due to the possibility of infection. This poses a challenge to education systems in regard to schools' eventual reopening, in the sense that there may be a short-term shortage of teachers and principals. There is also resistance from teachers' unions, who have already expressed opposition to a return to face-to-face instruction in some countries in the region.

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[41] These losses are just a small part of the total loss, if we take into account that this amount does not include losses in human capital due to the negative effects of malnutrition, deterioration in mental health, or the increase in teenage pregnancies (see Azevedo, J. P., and others. 'Simulating the Potential Impacts of COVID19 School Closures on Schooling and Learning Outcomes'. Policy Research Working Paper, No. 9285. World Bank Group, 2020).

[42] While, as of yet, there is no available data on parental support during the pandemic, there is evidence from other situations that parents with higher education levels spend more time helping their children with school activities (see Berniel, I. and R. Estrada. 'Poor Little Children: The Socio-economic Gap in Parental Responses to School Disadvantage'. Labour Economics, vol. 66, October 2020).

[43] Kim, L., and K. Asbury. "Like a rug had been pulled from under you." The impact of COVID-19 on teachers in England during the first six weeks of the UK lockdown. University of York, Department of Education, 2020; Talidong, K. J. B., and C. M. D. Toquero. 'Philippine teachers' practices to deal with anxiety amid COVID19'. Journal of Loss and Trauma, vol. 25, No. 6–7 (May 2020); UNESCO, Adverse consequences of school closures. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020.

[44] Zhang, W., and others. 'Suspending classes without stopping learning: China's education emergency management policy in the COVID-19 Outbreak'. Journal of Risk and Financial Management, vol. 13, No. 3 (March 2020).

[45] There is still a need for evidence on the effects of the pandemic on the working conditions and emotional health of teachers in Latin America. However, anecdotal evidence, as well as evidence from other countries, suggests that we can expect to see effects on teachers' workload and emotional well-being.

[46] Vaillant, D., and C. Rossel. 'Maestros en Latinoamérica: hacia una radiografía de la profesión' (Teachers in Latin America: towards an X-ray of the profession). Santiago de Chile: PREAL (Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas), 2006.

The crisis will also jeopardize the funding of education systems, not only because of the economic recession and the demand for resources from other sectors such as health and social protection,[47] [48] but also because of education systems' need for additional resources. In this regard, we can predict at least five sources of pressure for increased funding, in a context where governments have reduced fiscal capacity due to economic recession. First, as discussed below, the eventual reopening of schools will require additional resources to ensure schools are adapted and comply with health and safety protocols. Second, as school closures continue, many systems will be forced to expand and strengthen distance learning strategies, which will require significant investment. Third, faced with a bottleneck of teacher availability, systems need additional resources for hiring new teachers. Fourth, the health crisis will affect teachers' health, requiring more resources to cover medical disabilities and physical and mental health care. Finally, in countries where a large degree of education coverage is provided by private institutions, there may be an increased demand for places in public systems from parents who decide to transfer their children from private to public schools for economic reasons.[49] This increased demand on the public system could be serious, given that a significant number of private institutions will be forced to close due to the economic crisis.

4.   Emergency strategies adopted by countries in the region

Most countries in the region have implemented distance learning strategies to ensure that children and adolescents can continue their learning process (see Table A2, in annex). These strategies range from online education using digital technologies, educational radio and television broadcasts, to delivering study guides and printed materials in combination with the use of mobile phones. By the beginning of May, 18 countries[50] in the region had set up some kind of digital platform through their ministries of education.[51] In several cases, these platforms include materials for both teachers and students, with curricular content organized according to grade and subject. It should be noted that Uruguay leads the region in online education with the Basic Computer Connectivity for Online Learning (CEIBAL) plan. Created in 2007, the CEIBAL plan guarantees access to computers for all children and adolescents aged between 6 and 15 years, as well as providing digital platforms that cover different areas of the curriculum and which allow teachers to interact with students and monitor learning.[52]

One limitation of digital platforms is the difficulty of reaching children and adolescents living either in remote areas where connectivity levels are low, or in vulnerable households without electronic devices or internet access. To address this difficulty, some countries such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Panama and Venezuela have implemented alternative strategies using social networks and WhatsApp, as well as radio and television.[53] Others, such as Guatemala and Brazil, have combined mass distribution of printed materials with radio and television broadcasting in areas where there is no connectivity. On the other hand, countries such as Peru have gone further and issued tablets with data plans to students in rural areas, so that they can access the digital platforms designed for distance learning. Ecuador, meanwhile, has made agreements with mobile phone operators to send mass text messages containing educational content, and in Colombia operators have agreed not to apply charges for downloading content from the Ministry of Education.

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47 Blackman, A., and others. 'Public Policy to Tackle COVID-19: Recommendations for Latin America and the Caribbean'. Washington DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

48 World Bank. 'The Economy in the Time of Covid-19: LAC Semiannual Report'. Washington DC: World Bank, 2020.

49 Álvarez, H., G. Elacqua, and C. Méndez. La educación privada en América Latina y el Caribe en cuidados intensivos (Private education in Latin America and the Caribbean in intensive care). Enfoque Educación (Education Focus Blog), Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

50 Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

51 UNICEF. 'Latin America & the Caribbean COVID-19 Education Response [5 May 2020]'. UNICEF LACRO Education Section, 2020.

52 Elacqua, G., and N. Schady. La educación ante el Covid-19 en América Latina: Retos y alternativas de política (Education in the face of COVID-19 in Latin America: challenges and policy alternatives). Enfoque Educación (Education Focus Blog), Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

53 UNICEF. 'Latin America & the Caribbean COVID-19 Education Response [5 May 2020]'. UNICEF LACRO Education Section, 2020.

According to data collected by UNICEF from 20 countries in the region,[54] as of 27 May, 100 percent of these countries have granted students and teachers access to government-supported digital platforms, 85 percent were disseminating educational programmes on television while 70 percent are doing so on radio. Additionally, 60 percent have provided educational materials for home study and 60 percent have developed strategies to use mobile technology (WhatsApp, text messaging) or social networks to communicate with students.

Furthermore, some countries have implemented strategies to promote children's and adolescents' emotional well-being aimed directly at teachers or parents and caregivers, in an attempt to prevent and address the possible negative impacts of lockdown and school closures on children's and adolescent's emotional health. In Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama and Uruguay brochures have been made available to teachers and parents containing recommendations on the support they should provide to children to maintain their emotional stability. Furthermore, web portals have been created in Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico, with advice on recognizing symptoms of depression, compiled recommendations for parents and helplines operated by mental health professionals. Other countries such as Bolivia and Uruguay have also implemented this helplines strategy. Information on children's and adolescent's socioemotional needs has also been disseminated through videos on social networks and via radio and television in countries such as Guatemala and Venezuela (see Table A3, in annex).

As previously explained, one of the consequences of school closures is the loss of access to school feeding programmes. Some countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela have made efforts to continue school feeding programmes by providing vouchers or food directly to families.[55] However, there is no available data on how successful these efforts are in terms of coverage.

Countries in the region have made huge efforts and have implemented multiple strategies to continue with distance learning, and in some cases to guarantee children's and adolescent's physical and emotional well-being. However, these strategies are not reaching everyone equally. Students' educational experiences via distance learning differ widely across and within countries: from online education with access to educational materials aligned with the curriculum and permanent communication between students and teachers, to access to a radio or television programme without interaction with a teacher, to the delivery of study guides via WhatsApp viewed on the screen of their mother's or father's mobile phone. Moreover, a significant number of children and adolescents are not receiving any kind of distance learning modality. According to UNICEF, only 63 percent of countries in the region have alternative education systems to reach the most vulnerable groups.[56] This deficiency in coverage, combined with pre-existing structural barriers (differences in connectivity, access to a home environment for studying, and parental involvement and support, as described in the first part of this document), undoubtedly poses an imminent risk of widening education gaps in the region. It is therefore crucial to take every measure necessary to support the most vulnerable groups during the next stages of confronting and overcoming the current crisis.

5. Strategies for the future: a roadmap for the crisis with a vision for the future

Countries in the region face the challenge of addressing the educational emergency while planning a new normality that is still uncertain. This section presents a roadmap that offers guidelines at the country level. These guidelines are general enough to account for diversity in LAC, yet still factor in the minimum lines of action that must be taken to overcome the emergency and prevent educational gaps from becoming even wider.[57] The roadmap proposes six lines of action. The first

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54 UNICEF. 'Latin America & the Caribbean COVID-19 Education Response [27 May 2020]'. UNICEF LACRO Education Section, 2020.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 The design of the roadmap was informed by the 'Framework for Reopening Schools' from UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP); technical and academic papers (referenced throughout the section); experiences from other countries where reopening processes have already begun; and discussions with other experts and policy makers.

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four are designed to focus efforts on ensuring children's and adolescents' learning and well-being: 1) planning for the urgent reopening of schools; 2) developing a strategy to ensure learning for all students; 3) preserving schools' protective role and providing services that have been disrupted; and 4) ensuring the emotional well-being of the educational community (teachers, families and students). Additionally, two crosscutting themes are proposed: funding and coordination between the education sector and other sectors to execute the necessary actions; and managing the current emergency with a long-term vision, in such a way that investments made contribute towards rebuilding an education system that offers learning to all students.

5.1. Planning for the urgent reopening of schools

As more information becomes available on the behaviour of COVID-19 in children and that infection rates are under control, reopening schools is the priority for countries in the region. Evidence suggests that COVID-19 affects children and adolescents substantially less than adults: infection rates are lower, as are severity and fatality rates among those who do contract the virus.[58] [59] One issue on which there is still inconclusive evidence, however, is children's role in transmitting the virus and to what extent opening schools could cause infection rates to spike. Nevertheless, in most countries where schools were reopened 30 days after the peak of infection, no change in the trend of new cases was seen.[60] This suggests that it may be feasible to reopen schools once the epidemiological curve begins to fall.

Available evidence suggests that it is possible to reopen schools under two conditions: that local transmission rates are low; and that schools can comply with biosecurity protocols to minimize the risk of infection, including physical distancing measures, hand hygiene, use of masks, and monitoring of symptoms.[61] [62] [63] This means that the decision on when to reopen schools will depend on the situation in each country. Within each country, meanwhile, the decision will also depend on the local context in terms of the epidemiological conditions and governments' and schools' actual capacities. Given this diversity, it is crucial to articulate the urgency of opening schools and for **governments to draw up detailed and rigorous plans for reopening schools as soon as infection rates drop**.

Promoting the urgent reopening of schools is important for two main reasons. First, to ensure continuity of learning for all students, particularly the most vulnerable. As described above, not all students have access to the same quality of distance learning measures, and while in the long term connectivity and electronic devices should be universally accessible, this is not possible in the short term. Additionally, even if there is access to some kind of distance learning, students still miss out on the socialization that occurs at school. Recovering this is vital to maintaining children's and adolescents' learning processes and emotional development. Second, schools are not only learning spaces, but also protective spaces. As shown in section three, not only does closing schools impact negatively on learning, but also on several other dimensions of children's and adolescents' development, such as emotional health, physical protection and nutrition. Therefore, reopening schools is also a way to ensure the full development of children and adolescents.

The reopening process requires an emergency plan led by the ministries of education in coordination with other sectors, such as health and telecommunications. The main actions governments should consider during the planning process are described below.

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[58] Götzinger, F., and others. 'COVID-19 in children and adolescents in Europe: a multinational, multicentre cohort study'. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, vol. 4, No. 9 (September 2020).

[59] Stokes, E. K. and others. 'Coronavirus Disease 2019 Case Surveillance – United States, January 22–May 30, 2020'. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, vol. 69, No. 24 (June 2020).

[60] Crawfurd, L., S. Hares, and A. L. Minardi. 'Back to School: An Update on COVID Cases as Schools Reopen'. Center for Global Development, 12 June 2020.

[61] Couzin-Frankel, J., G. Vogel, and M. Weiland. 'School openings across globe suggest ways to keep coronavirus at bay, despite outbreaks'. Science, 7 July 2020.

[62] Oster, E. 'Triangulating Evidence on Outbreaks in Kid Settings'. Parent Data, 30 July 2020.

[63] CDC. 'Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020'. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 26 August 2020.

Defining clear guidelines on the requirements that schools must meet for safe reopening

The first priority in reopening schools is protecting the health of those who attend educational institutions (students, teachers and administrative staff). To do so, schools must have biosecurity protocols that minimize the risk of infection. Governments should **draw up clear guidelines on the requirements for the safe reopening of schools, as well as the criteria to be taken into account when deciding whether or not to open a school. These requirements are mainly related to physical distancing, hygiene and health prevention.**[64]

Complying with physical distancing requirements involves regulating the number of students allowed in a single space and the distance between them; avoiding crowding by applying procedures for students to enter and exit (e.g. staggered schedules and restrictions on parents entering schools); as well as measures related to school transportation, sports and recreation activities (e.g. small groups and outdoors), and food.[65]

Measures to ensure physical distancing, in particular reducing the number students who can share a space, involve making decisions about the number of students who can be in schools at any one time. To achieve this, schools should either be opened to certain groups of students (for example, initially opening to those who most need the face-to-face elements that schools can provide); or to all students, with attendance organized into groups who attend different shifts (per day or per week). This decision will depend on each country's specific circumstances and requirements. For example, some countries or cities may decide to open the lower grades first as younger children require the highest level of face-to-face supervision during the learning process. Other countries, meanwhile, may decide to prioritize getting students from higher grades back into school as they may be at greater risk of dropping out. Others may decide to open to all grades and vary instructional hours according to the needs of different groups of students. In any case, this decision must be informed by both academic needs (for face-to-face learning activities) and protective needs (school-provided services necessary for students' development), as well as the health risks posed by opening to various age groups.[66]

Regarding hygiene and health measures, the practices adopted so far, as well as the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations,[67] demonstrate that there is a need to maintain minimum hygiene levels. This involves cleaning schools, frequent hand washing, use of masks/face coverings when physical distancing cannot be observed,[68] monitoring symptoms in students and school staff, and clear protocols to follow if cases are detected in schools.[69] Therefore, access to cleaning supplies and water is a necessary condition for reopening.[70]

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[64] Bos, M. S., L. Minoja, and W. Dalaison. 'Strategies for School Reopenings during Covid-19'. Washington DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

[65] For examples of these decisions, see the cases of China, Denmark, Norway, Singapore and Taiwan in Melnick, H. and L. Darling-Hammond. Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines From Other Countries. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2020.

[66] Regarding countries outside the region that have already opened schools, Canada, Denmark and Norway prioritized reopening pre-primary and primary grades, while China prioritized opening to students who must prepare for secondary education entrance or completion exams. Uruguay prioritized rural schools when the decision was made to re-open schools. This was due to rural areas' low population density and low rates of COVID-19 infection, but also because of the low levels of internet connectivity that prevented students from engaging with distance learning methods.
One approach to determining which age groups to prioritize when reopening face-to-face classes is to start with the youngest students, as infection and severity rates are lower among younger children. While this is a valid option, it must be noted that all ages require a degree of face-to-face education to promote continuity of learning and emotional health (for example, interaction with teachers and peers during adolescence plays a crucial role in defining educational trajectories). With this in mind, one option could be to give younger age groups priority in terms of number of face-to-face instructional hours, but with opportunities for all age groups to attend face-to-face classes.

[67] WHO. 'Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19: Annex to Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19'. World Health Organization, 2020.

[68] WHO does not provide specific guidelines on the use of face coverings in schools and states that this decision depends on how widespread the virus is at the community level and to what extent it is possible to maintain a distance of one metre between people. The guidelines regarding the use of face coverings differs from country to country. While in the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend the use of masks by teachers, administrators, and students (particularly older students), in the United Kingdom, the Department for Education does not recommend the use of masks as long as students and teachers form groups that are kept consistent, with contact between groups minimized.

[69] It is important to note that there is still only limited evidence available on the effectiveness of temperature checks in managing COVID-19 transmission. In contrast, there is strong evidence that hand washing is an effective measure against transmission of the virus (see Carvalho, S., and others. 'Planning for School Reopening and Recovery After COVID-19: An Evidence Kit for Policymakers'. Washington DC: Center for Global Development, 2020).

[70] In the context of Latin America, where there are still schools without access to water, an alternative is the use of alcohol-based gels, which have been shown to be effective in preventing the transmission of the virus and are recommended by WHO as an option if access to clean water is limited. This could be a temporary hand-hygiene solution. However, the availability of water is essential for keeping schools clean. Understood in this way, governments must ensure that schools have adequate access to water before reopening.

Carrying out a quick diagnosis on the capacity of safely reopening schools, and design specific plans for continuity of education services according to the specific context

The decision to reopen will depend on the local context across two dimensions: 1) the epidemiological conditions and 2) schools' capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols in terms of infrastructure (capacity of classrooms and other spaces); availability of water, as well hand-hygiene and cleaning products; and transport conditions. There will be variation within the same country or region in the extent to which both of these conditions can be satisfied, so plans for continuity of education services (with or without opening) must be designed according to the specifics of each type of school (see Figure 7).

■ **Figure 7.** Typology of schools for planning reopening
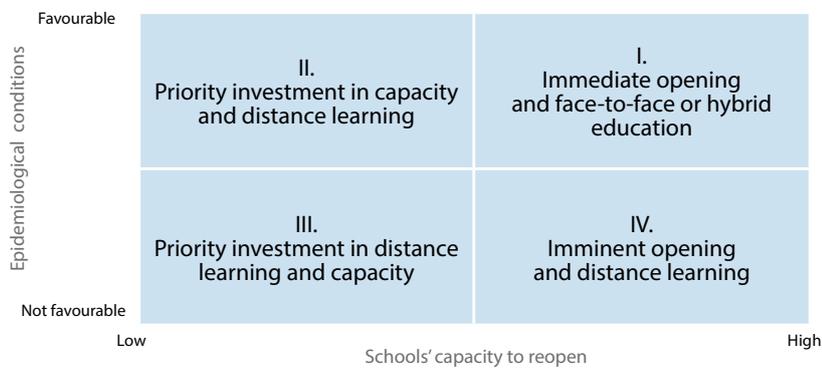
- **I. Schools for immediate opening:** schools located in areas where it is possible to open from an epidemiological point of view and which also have the capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols. These schools will be able to open immediately and to begin to implement face-to-face or hybrid education actions (complemented by distance learning – see section 5.2).

- **II. Schools requiring priority investment in capacity:** schools located in areas where it is epidemiologically feasible to open but which do not yet have the capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols. These schools must be prioritized so that they have the necessary resources to implement the actions required to comply with health safety protocols.[71] These schools will have to continue with distance learning while they implement the necessary actions to comply with regulations.

- **III. Schools requiring priority investment in distance learning and capacity:** these schools are the most urgent for attention, as they will take longer to open and students will therefore miss out on more school time. These are schools located in areas where it is not yet possible to open from an epidemiological point of view and which do not have the capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols. For these schools, efforts must prioritize educational provision and ensure that students receive quality distance learning (discussed in section 5.2), while investing in improving schools' capacity to open when health conditions allow.

- **IV. Schools for imminent opening:** schools that have the capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols but are located in areas where it is not yet epidemiologically feasible to open. These schools will be able to open soon (once health conditions allow) and therefore will offer distance learning for a short time. They will then be able to begin to implement face-to-face or hybrid education actions (with complementary distance learning – see section 5.2).

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[71] Water supply, hand washing facilities, infrastructure adaptations to comply with physical distancing, etc. See details of water, sanitation and hygiene requirements in the practical guide for reopening schools developed by the Global Education Cluster, with input from Save the Children and UNESCO, among others.

The configuration of schools according to this typology in each country or municipality will determine the different investment priorities in the short- and medium-term, as well as the routes required to preserve the continuity of education services. For example, in areas with high infection rates and where schools have low capacity to comply with biosecurity protocols (quadrant III), the priority is improving the access to and quality of distance learning provision in the short term; while in areas where infection rates are under control and schools have low capacity (quadrant II) the priority is investing in schools' infrastructure to allow them to open as soon as possible. One input that can be very useful for governments in this diagnostic and planning process are the UNESCO-UNICEF-WFP guidelines that are directed both to ministries of education[72] and to school administrators and principals.[73] These guidelines make it possible to identify needs at the school level to allow for safe reopening and management of schools.

Maintaining channels of communication with parents and teachers, and encouraging them to be involved in the plans for reopening

The issue of reopening schools has caused controversy in several countries, particularly among parents and teachers. While evidence is slowly emerging on how to open safely, there is resistance from some parents to sending their children to school due to fear of infection of the children and the families themselves. Similarly, teachers have expressed concerns regarding their own health in the face of returning to classes on a face-to-face basis, and in some countries, unions have openly expressed their opposition to a return to face-to-face classes.

It is important for the educational community to be involved in planning the reopening in order to manage fear and risk perceptions, as well as to build trust. To do so, spaces must be opened for dialogue with both teachers and parent organizations so that their needs and concerns can be understood, and mechanisms can be built collaboratively to enable the safe reopening of schools. It is especially important to involve trade unions in discussions about reopening, and to reach agreements on the basic conditions for opening (e.g. maintaining the option of working from home for teachers in high-risk categories, ensuring teachers have hygiene and protective equipment, etc.). Simultaneously, it is crucial to maintain dialogue with parents and to win their support, as they will be the ones who will ultimately push for a return to school if they see that schools are serious in their preparations.

The more governments engage in rigorous planning for reopening schools that takes into account the various contingencies that may arise, the more likely teachers and parents are to support returning to the classroom. Governments should provide clear and concise information on plans for reopening at the national and sub-national levels; publish the guidelines and protocols they have designed to open schools safely; detail how schools are being prepared for reopening, what to expect from a safe school, and what the criteria will be for both opening and closing schools in the event of a resurgence in Covid-19 cases. To ensure messages reach various audiences, this information should be delivered using diverse media platforms, such as television, radio, text messages and print media. The media has an especially important role to play in showing the damage done to children by school closures, publicizing government plans in clear language, and following up on cases of reopening as they arise.

Ensuring the human expertise necessary for reopening

Education systems face challenges to ensure that they have the teaching staff necessary for reopening schools. On the one hand, there will be a reduction in the number of teachers available for face-to-face instruction given that a significant number of them belong to groups at risk of infection (because they are over 60 years old or because they have underlying health conditions). Simultaneously, some physical distancing measures, such as smaller class sizes or the combination of

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[72] UNESCO-UNICEF-WFP. 'Guidance notes on reopening schools in the context of COVID-19 for ministries of education in Latin America and the Caribbean'. Panama City: United Nations Children's Fund, 2020.

[73] Ibid.

face-to-face and distance classes, will require additional teachers. Furthermore, not all teachers have the training or resources to implement high-quality distance education strategies.

Efforts should be made to **expand the available teaching force via measures such as recruiting temporary teachers or recruiting highly-trained young professionals interested in working in the sector during the emergency** (with targeted and expedited recruitment schemes such as Teach for All).[74] A complementary option that could be considered is paying a **temporary bonus to teachers who decide to do face-to-face work** (with the understanding that home-based teachers will continue to be paid). On the other hand, given that teachers who are at greater risk of infection will not be able to attend in person for some time but can continue working from home, **teachers' work should be reorganized** so that those who cannot attend school handle responsibilities aligned to the school needs during this period. These could include monitoring students via telephone or through digital platforms (depending on what technology is available), designing guides and materials that can be used by other teachers, and implementing online teaching activities where infrastructure is available.

5.2.   Developing a strategy to ensure all students have access to learning

Each country's decision to reopen will depend on the national and local contexts. There is still uncertainty around when schools will reopen due to the pandemic's development in the region. We can expect, however, that the reopening will be gradual, and that some schools will remain closed for several more months. Additionally, further COVID-19 outbreaks may occur after schools have reopened, forcing authorities to close schools once more. On the other hand, even when students return to face-to-face classes, in many cases they will do so alternately (in groups or in shifts) as schools may not have sufficient capacity to maintain physical distancing if all students attend campus at the same time. Given these constraints, **governments must go beyond the emergency teaching solutions that were implemented at the onset of the pandemic and design a system-wide strategy to ensure all students have access to a robust, high-quality education.** This requires actions along five components: 1) learning recovering; 2) maintaining student retention and connection to school; 3) hybrid learning schemes; 4) teacher training; and 5) support for families. These components are described below.

Preparing plans for learning recovering or remediation

Students will have significant lags or even losses in learning when they return to classrooms, especially those disconnected from school the longest (as described in section 3). Once students return to school, it will be important to **quickly measure students' learning in critical areas such as reading, writing and mathematics.** This will allow the extent of the lag to be identified so that the strategies required to recoup learning can be implemented, with efforts focused on the students with greatest lags. Some schools will have this capacity, but others will need technical support to conduct these assessments promptly and efficiently. Learning assessment institutes in each country can help to design and implement rapid assessments for priority learning areas.

At both the national and sub-national level, governments should **support schools to have remediation plans ready for priority areas at each educational level.** To achieve this, governments should learn from previous experiences of accelerated learning programmes that have been implemented in humanitarian crisis contexts or for over-age learners, and which are based on active learning methodologies, focused on students and on strengthening their self-esteem and motivation for learning.[75] It should also be noted that students in the same grade will return at different stages in their learning. It is therefore more important than ever to implement methodologies focused on teaching according to students' actual learning level. There are various ways to implement such programmes, from personalized or small-group tutorials to

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[74] In some cases, if there is a significant need for new teachers and national legislation does not permit recruitment beyond the regulated teacher recruitment processes, countries will have to implement emergency ordinances allowing rapid recruitment.

[75] Longden, K. 'Accelerated Learning Programmes: What can we learn from them about curriculum reform?' Background paper, Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/4. UNESCO, 2013.

the use of specialized software based on active teaching methods, and which provide students with immediate feedback.[76] In some cases these programmes have been developed with the support of community volunteers who received previous training, or even university students, as in Chile's tutoring programme.[77] The remediation model will depend on each country's needs and the technological resources they have available. In any case, these programmes should incorporate activities and materials suitable to students' learning level and should be aligned with learning objectives defined according to the priorities identified.

Ensuring that all students stay in school and remain connected to school

One of the most serious risks facing the school-aged population is not returning to school when face-to-face classes resume. This risk is not only due to the economic downturn and the prolonged school closures, but also fear on the part of parents or children and adolescents themselves around returning to school. There are at least three actions that governments should consider to prevent dropouts and ensure that students continue their education: monitoring students, campaigns to promote returning to school and deepening connections with schools, and eliminating economic barriers.

Ideally, countries should improve their **systems for student monitoring**, so as to be able to better monitor students at the individual level. This will be possible in the 70 percent of education systems in the region that have the necessary information management systems to conduct such monitoring.[78] Where this is not possible, an alternative is to design monitoring schemes with the support of teachers and communities, particularly in rural areas. For example, teachers may report having lost contact with their students during the distance learning period, or families themselves may report cases of children and young people deciding not to remain connected to school. This information must be consolidated at the school or regional level (province, municipality) to take concrete actions to reconnect students with the education system.

Second, when schools reopen and while distance learning schemes are in place during the crisis, it will be essential to carry out **clear campaigns for staying in and returning to school**,[79] and to ensure that children and adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable, do not get left outside the system. Stay in school campaigns should communicate the importance of continuing learning at home and staying connected to school.[80] Once schools reopen, campaigns should focus on the importance of returning to face-to-face classes and communicate a reassuring message to families about the safety of returning (see section 5.1). These campaigns could use mass media such as radio and television, as well as text messages sent directly to families. Education ministries and local authorities will play a critical role in providing the support and credibility such campaigns require. Likewise, local-level community organizations, as well as adolescents and young people themselves, can contribute to implementing information and awareness campaigns in their communities.

The third action for promoting returning to school and preventing dropouts is to minimize the costs of attending classes. Here, efforts should be made to **reduce or even eliminate tuition costs for the most vulnerable families** and to provide subsidies for expenses such as uniforms, transportation or schoolbooks. There is evidence which suggests that reducing these barriers can incentivize children and adolescents to return school, as well as prevent future dropouts.[81] Additionally, the cash transfer programmes in place in most countries in the region can help to ensure that children stay in school during

[76] Muralidharan, K., A. Singh, and A. Ganimian. 'Disrupting education? Experimental Evidence on Technology-Aided Instruction in India'. American Economic Review, vol. 109, No. 4, 1426–1460 (April 2019).

[77] Cabezas, V., J. Cuesta, and F. Gallego. 'Effects of Short-Term Tutoring on Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Chile'. Working Paper, May 2011.

[78] Álvarez, H., and others. 'La educación en tiempos de coronavirus: Los sistemas educativos de América Latina y el Caribe ante COVID-19' (Education in the time of Coronavirus: education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean in the face of COVID-19). Discussion Paper, No. IDB-DP-00768. Social Sector – Education Division Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

[79] UNICEF. 'Unicef Back-to-School Guide: Evidence-Based Strategies to Resume Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition'. United Nations Children's Fund, 2013.

[80] Staying connected to the school will vary somewhat in each context depending on what mechanisms are in place for this. Possible examples include text messages or calls to teachers, or communication through virtual platforms.

[81] Carvalho, S., and others. 'Planning for School Reopening and Recovery After COVID-19: An Evidence Kit for Policymakers'. Washington DC: Center for Global Development, 2020.

the current crisis. Governments should not only continue these programmes, but also consider expanding cash assistance to vulnerable households that were not eligible for such programmes prior to the crisis.

Finally, in countries or cities where a significant number of students are expected to dropout of private schools, governments could consider **issuing vouchers to attend private schools that meet minimum quality standards.** This would not only prevent students from dropping out, but also reduce pressure on the public system and avoid the closure of high-quality private schools and the resulting loss of existing capacity at such a critical time.

Designing hybrid learning schemes that all students can access, taking into account that not all instructional hours will take place in school

The distance learning actions implemented in recent months have been designed as well as possible to deal with the emergency. They were, however, planned as "emergency teaching" interventions to temporarily maintain some continuity in educational provision. In the coming months, countries will move from "emergency" mode to a new "normal" mode, where it will be difficult to ensure that all students receive 100 percent of their education in a face-to-face setting. This situation means that it is crucial to develop a strategy with teaching and learning schemes that can be adapted according to various contexts and students' needs, bearing in mind that several schools will be unable to open in the coming months and that, when schools do reopen, not all instructional hours will take place at school.

These schemes require a **pedagogical design that combines face-to-face and distance teaching and learning processes, and which makes full use of the technology available in the short term to reach all students.** The specific characteristics of these bimodal or hybrid models will depend on the context of each country or region (province, state) and the educational and technological resources available. Here, it is important to clarify that the remote component is not necessarily online learning. Where digital resources are limited (as is the case in much of the region)[82] it will be possible to make use of low-tech solutions such as delivering printed materials, combined with content delivered by media such as television or radio, and teacher supervision via telephone. Of course, in the medium term, the ideal is to have digital platforms that allow students and teachers to share content and interact in the same space. However, the reality in the region means that this will not be possible in the short term.[83] **The short-term goal is to ensure that students receive an "educational package" while schools are closed or partially open.** This educational package should guarantee, at a minimum, access to quality content (via digital platforms, television, radio or print); interaction and feedback with the teacher (via digital platforms, social networks, telephone, or face-to-face once schools reopen); and materials (print or digital) with which to carry out the corresponding learning activities. Table A4 (in annex) shows the types of resources and platforms available for the different requirements of this educational package. The design of these packages will allow for various learning paths, depending on the digital conditions achievable in the short term, the availability of content at the regional and local levels, and health conditions at the local level. For example, in areas where it is possible to secure connectivity and devices in the short term, the package will include digital content and platforms – while in remote areas where Internet capacity is low in the short term, the package may include radio and television content, printed guides and telephone communication. When health conditions allow, face-to-face contact will increase and the dependence on distance learning will be reduced. However, it is critical to plan for quality distance learning to deal with the possibility of further delays in school openings or if further closures are required in response to a possible resurgence in cases, as appears to be the case in some instances.

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[82] Rieble-Aubourg, S., and A. Viteri. 'COVID-19 : ¿Estamos preparados para el aprendizaje en línea?' (COVID-19: Are we ready for online learning?). CIMA Note 20, Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

[83] Only Uruguay has robust digital platforms (see Álvarez, H., and others. 'La educación en tiempos de coronavirus: Los sistemas educativos de América Latina y el Caribe ante COVID-19' (Education in the time of Coronavirus: education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean in the face of COVID-19). Discussion Paper, No. IDB-DP-00768. Social Sector – Education Division Inter-American Development Bank, 2020).

Designing these new hybrid models and consolidating a high-quality distance learning programme that is accessible to all students requires significant technical and human efforts. Therefore, **it will be essential to determine which areas of learning to concentrate efforts on during the coming months**. This will require strong leadership from ministries of education. Additionally, it is advisable to **have a specialized team or taskforce at the ministerial or secretarial level that is dedicated to designing learning paths aligned to the curriculum. This team should be made up of experts in pedagogy and in the use of technology in education**. These teams would help with the general design of hybrid teaching schemes; identify existing content and platforms that can be used for each prioritized subject area and grade level according to the curriculum, and that can be incorporated into the defined distance learning modalities; and design guides and protocols for implementing these hybrid teaching schemes.[84] These teams would also help to identify what new educational content or resources are required in the short term.

This model for the new normal requires high-quality educational content that students can access from their homes, as well as distance feedback mechanisms. Therefore, over the following months, **a set of high-quality educational resources should be consolidated for the various distance learning modalities, and these resources should correspond to the curriculum for each subject and grade**. Existing resources already curated by specialized institutions in the field such as the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank should be used to achieve this objective.[85] Additionally, efforts must be made at the regional level to consolidate the new materials produced by various countries during the pandemic, so as to identify what new content is required and to create mechanisms that promote the creation of new content to be shared among countries in the region which share the same language, thereby allowing for economies of scale. The leadership and participation of the United Nations (UNESCO and UNICEF), as well as organizations such as the IDB and the World Bank, could be decisive in the effort to obtain high-quality resources in a relatively short space of time. To achieve this objective, it will be vital to involve countries in the region that have made significant progress in developing content and pedagogical strategies for the different modalities (as is the case of Uruguay for digital platforms and content, and Mexico for television content) that can be shared with other countries in the region.

Delivering high-quality content is a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for learning. To be effective, a distance or hybrid education model must contain mechanisms that allow for teacher-student interaction. This interaction is crucial to keeping students motivated. It also allows students' learning and well-being to be monitored, as well as offering the possibility of providing the feedback necessary to continue with the learning processes according to students' needs. Therefore, regardless of which distance education modalities are implemented, it is essential to **ensure that all children and adolescents have access to some means of communication with their teachers, whether through digital platforms or mobile phones**. This will be especially important where schools are expected to remain closed for longer periods, as there will be no face-to-face time to conduct this interaction.

Therefore, universal access to electronic devices with Internet access should be a medium-term goal, starting by ensuring the most vulnerable households have access to connectivity.[86] In the short term (the coming weeks), flexible solutions to guarantee a minimum level of interaction with the school must be implemented. These solutions will vary depending on the technological infrastructure available, and should be focused on children and adolescents from low-income households and areas where schools cannot reopen in the coming months. For example, **in areas where there is no access to connectivity, it is essential to ensure that students have access to a phone and a basic plan for calling and texting. While in areas**

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84 Guides and activities with specific learning objectives that students can develop at home, guidance on using distance learning content, and guidance on what activities to prioritize for face-to-face teaching. For example, taking advantage of face-to-face interaction with the teacher, collaborative work, or play and interaction between students.

85 Reimers, F., and others. 'Supporting the continuation of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Annotated resources for online learning'. OECD, 2020, has multiple resources in Spanish and English for different subjects and ages; the list of Education Above All resources, where you can find resources in Spanish and English for some subjects and ages; the UNESCO repository that includes platforms, applications and some content; and the World Bank's repository of resources and platforms for distance education.

86 Lustig, N., and M. Tommasi. 'Covid-19 and social protection of poor and vulnerable groups in Latin America: a conceptual framework'. UNDP Latin America and the Caribbean, COVID-19 Public Policy Document Series, No. 8, 2020.

with infrastructure for Internet access, access to devices and data plans must be ensured. Wider access to data can be achieved by reducing Internet fees for accessing educational content, distributing cards with data plans or creating public internet "hotspots".[87]

Finally, it is necessary to **ensure the availability of the texts and educational materials needed to continue the learning process**. This is especially important for younger students, who require writing, colouring and sensory materials. As schools reopen, these materials can be delivered during attendance times. Otherwise, it will be necessary to make plans for sending materials to households, as several countries have done during the emergency. Items such as the Early Childhood Development Kit for Emergencies developed by UNICEF[88] can be especially useful for pre-school children.

Developing and consolidating teacher training and support programmes

Today, more than ever, we must ensure that countries have a trained and highly motivated teaching force to meet the challenge of supporting students in the midst of this unprecedented crisis. When implementing educational models that ensure learning even at a distance, the **teacher's role must be focused on supporting students and on pedagogical practices that foster autonomy, motivation and the ability to learn how to learn**. This requires trained teachers to implement active, student-centred practices that prioritize inquiry, applying knowledge, and connecting what is learned to students' daily life, rather than memorizing content. Furthermore, teachers must possess the technological skills to implement educational models designed for bimodal or hybrid education.

Given the current limitations in teacher training,[89 90] **a training and support plan for teachers must be developed that equips them with the technological and pedagogical skills required to implement the strategies (distance or hybrid) that will be implemented over the coming months**. To do this, countries can adapt and promote existing online training programmes[91] and continuing education programmes with mentoring or coaching schemes[92] and pedagogically trained tutors, who can quickly help to implement training processes for hybrid or distance education. In addition, to equip teachers in a flexible way over the coming months, they should be offered clear guidance (through written or video guides) with examples and activities they can easily use with their students according to the topic and grade, that use the content being delivered in different modalities, and which help to motivate students to learn and work autonomously.

As with content creation, this is an opportunity to unite efforts at the regional level and **develop a large regional teacher training platform** with online courses, demonstrations of guides, plans for hybrid education in various topic areas, and spaces for collaboration between teachers, schools and education authorities. This platform could be promoted by cooperating agencies with relevant experience and interest in the region, such as the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In addition to helping to address the current crisis, this platform would establish capacity to contribute to teacher training in the region in the medium term.

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87 Trucano, M. 'How ministries of education work with mobile operators, telecom providers, ISPs and others to increase access to digital resources during COVID19-driven school closures (Coronavirus)'. Education for Global Development, World Bank, 2020.

88 UNICEF. 'Aprendizaje a través del juego: reforzar el aprendizaje a través del juego en los programas de educación en la primera infancia' (Learning through play: strengthening learning through play in early years educational programmes). New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2018.

89 Rieble-Aubourg, S., and A. Viteri. 'COVID-19: ¿Estamos preparados para el aprendizaje en línea?' (COVID-19: Are we ready for online learning?). CIMA Note 20, Inter-American Development Bank, 2020.

90 Elacqua, G., and others. 'Profesión: profesor en América Latina ¿Por qué se perdió el prestigio docente y cómo recuperarlo?' (Profession: teacher in Latin America – why did teachers' prestige disappear and how do we get it back?). Washington DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2018.

91 Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). 'Políticas exitosas de desarrollo profesional docente en América Latina y el Caribe 2005-2016' (Successful policies for teachers' professional development in Latin America and the Caribbean 2005–2016). Caracas: CAF Development Bank of Latin America, 2019.

92 For example: Colombia (Programa Todos a Aprender), Ecuador (Programa de Acompañamiento Pedagógico en Territorio), and Peru (Acompañamiento Pedagógico Multigrado, and Soporte Pedagógico).

It is important to bear in mind that to be effective, teacher training requires an investment of teachers' time. In this time of crisis, extra time is scarcer than ever, and teachers may be resistant to devoting additional hours to continued training. To avoid resistance, it is important to maintain an ongoing dialogue with teachers and offer monetary incentives for investing their time in training (for example, some form of recognition or certificate that they can use later on in their teaching career).

Strengthening family guidance strategies to support home learning

While schools remain closed and during the process of reopening with hybrid education schemes, students will require close support at home from their caregivers. This is especially important in younger children, who do not yet have the skills to work autonomously, and who require play-based and interactive activities to learn.[93] For older children and adolescents, the goal is not for parents to replace the teacher, but to create an enabling environment for learning. This involves providing physical space, materials and time (for example, establishing routines, protecting study time and not exceeding the time allotted for household chores, particularly for girls), and ensuring they can access content and communicate with the school in the defined distance mode. Governments must create or strengthen guidance and support programmes for parents, and align them with the educational strategy to be developed in the coming months. This could include, for example, providing specific guides by age group for support at home for certain priority areas; establishing helplines where parents can resolve their doubts about carrying out work at home; and offering concrete guidance on parental practices (through SMS, radio and television programmes, print media) to enable parents to support their children in academic activities and promote emotional well-being (for the latter, see section 5.4). To do this, countries can use existing resources that have been consolidated by organizations such as UNESCO,[94] as well as resources that have been created in the region during these past months and that can be adapted according to country needs (see Table A3, in annex).

This is particularly important for parents with primary school children, so communication strategies should be designed to be easy to understand, with information and activities that can be implemented at home, and which can be disseminated through different media, such as television, radio, text messages or print media.

5.3. Maintaining the protective role of the school, particularly for those most vulnerable

The school provides services that go beyond learning and that help to protect and promote child and adolescent development. Efforts should be maintained and strengthened to continue essential services and programmes, particularly for those most vulnerable. First, **schools must retain programmes that provide food**, which is to be consumed in schools, following the necessary hygiene precautions. In addition, given that students will not necessarily attend every day when schools reopen, it is important to ensure that vulnerable children are provided with basic food on the days that they do not go to school, through the direct delivery of food baskets to households, or food vouchers in urban areas. To achieve this, as mentioned below, coordination with the social protection sector is of the utmost importance.

Second, every effort should be made to **maintain the protective services offered by the school in terms of detecting and preventing child neglect or abuse**. Continuous contact with students while schools are closed is essential to achieving this goal. To do this, both teachers and welfare teams can actively help by making check-up calls and sounding the necessary alarms to the relevant child protection institutions. In addition, helplines can be set up so that families, the community, or children and adolescents themselves, can ask for help or report if, for example, very young children are left at home alone.

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93 UNICEF. 'Learning through play: Strengthening learning through play in early childhood education programmes'. New York: United Nations Children's Fund, 2018.
94 UNESCO. Responding to COVID-19: Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: Thematic resources.

Third, as more sectors of the economy have opened up and adults go out to work, children and adolescents have less supervision and support during the hours when they were normally at school, which can increase risky behaviours such as pregnancy or substance use. Schools should **continue health promotion and prevention programmes**, such as sex education and substance abuse prevention, and find ways to deliver them at a distance. In many cases, schools have had to suspend these programmes because of the emergency. However, as school closures persist, it is important to ensure continuity, particularly for those who will not have the option of physically attending school in the coming months.

5.4.   Ensuring the emotional well-being of the educational community

We are facing a crisis that will have adverse effects on the emotional health of adults, as well as children and adolescents.[95] Ensuring the emotional well-being of children and adolescents requires a comprehensive approach that considers parents and teachers' mental health. It is a priority to support families and schools to identify and prevent mental health problems, and to promote a safe and caring environment. **Parents should be guided with self-care strategies and concrete tools, so that they, in turn, can offer emotional support to their children and detect potential warning signs of mental health issues that require specialized care**. In particular, families should be guided to establish routines and structures that, in some way, maintain the dynamic of socialization and positive family environment, and to manage feelings of fear and anxiety caused by the pandemic.[96] This can be achieved by providing guides and printed or digital materials, delivering short messages with clear guidelines for action, and establishing helplines.[97]

The current crisis is hugely different from any other emergency, and there is likely to be an atypical level of stress and anxiety upon returning to school. Both teachers and students have faced adverse situations that will make returning to "normality" difficult. While it is desirable to have health workers support in adapting socioemotional development strategies, screening for mental health problems and providing specialized care where needed, not all schools have the resources to do so. Therefore, ministries of education, with the support of the health authorities, should offer schools guidelines on emotional management upon return, outline strategies for emotional containment at the collective level, and enable the education community to discuss what has happened and have basic tools in place for emotional well-being. In addition, schools should be supported to ensure they have strategies that can be incorporated into the curriculum, with specific activities that promote the development of socioemotional skills and contribute to the emotional well-being of children and adolescents.[98] For this, teacher training will be essential (see section 5.2).

Finally, it is important to ensure the emotional well-being of teachers so that they, in turn, can support students. Teachers should therefore be offered socioemotional support and it should be ensured that they have emotional coping mechanisms and tools to promote their mental health. To do this, it is important to seek out mechanisms that help to strengthen support networks among the teachers themselves, and to ensure that they have access to specialized care if they need it.

5.5.   Financing and coordination

Implementing the necessary actions to safely reopen schools, and to recover and strengthen the educational trajectories of children and young people in the region, will require additional resources to those foreseen for the education sector before the pandemic. The economic crisis, added to the demand for resources from other sectors such as health and social

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[95] United Nations. 'COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health'. Policy Brief New York: United Nations, 2020.

[96] Galea, S., R.M. Merchant, and N. Lurie. 'The mental health consequences of COVID-19 and physical distancing: the need for prevention and early intervention'. JAMA Internal Medicine, vol 180, No. 6 (April 2020): Dalton, L., E. Rapa, and A. Stein. 'Protecting the psychological health of children through effective communication about COVID-19'. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, vol. 4, No. 5, 346–347 (May 2020).

[97] See Table A3 for examples of the socioemotional support strategies for families implemented by some LAC countries during the emergency. Several international organizations have also made practical resources available for teachers and caregivers, so that they can support the emotional well-being of children and adolescents in the midst of the crisis. For example, the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and UNESCO.

[98] World Bank. 'The Covid-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and Policy Responses'. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2020.

protection, may jeopardize the availability of resources needed to implement recovery plans. Therefore, **budgets for education at all levels should be protected to the maximum extent possible, and it should be ensured that budget size is maintained or even increased in absolute terms. Otherwise, the human development of an entire generation will be compromised**. This requires a commitment to children and adolescents at the country level, and strong national leadership from governments, especially ministries and secretaries of education, to identify the investment needs and the medium- and long-term costs of not implementing the actions required.[99]

The solutions needed to escape the emergency and ensure the well-being and learning of all students are complex and require interventions in different dimensions (mental health, protection, food security, safe water and sanitation, telecommunications, and of course, education). In addition to economic resources, technical knowledge and coordination between sectors are required to reach coordinated and effective solutions. Governments should consider at least two concrete actions to maximize technical and financial resources, and to ensure a certain level of coordination. First, **form national and local intersectoral working groups on education during the COVID-19 emergency**. These working groups should be spaces to plan, coordinate and monitor the strategies required to comprehensively maintain the continuity of education for all students. As a minimum, they should include the health, telecommunications, child protection and social protection sectors, and of course, the education sector. They could also benefit from the technical secretariat of an organization with cross-sectoral technical capacity, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Having these sectors in the same working group will also be an opportunity to redirect budgets and allocate them in a coordinated manner to the actions required. Additionally, these intersectoral working groups may have technical committees for specific topics, such as emotional well-being and mental health.

The second action to broaden the governments' capacity is to create **partnerships with civil society organizations, promote private sector participation, and harness know-how and existing capacity**. This is especially important for content creation, and in the design of pedagogical strategies and socioemotional support strategies, where different organizations have extensive experience. For example, partnerships may be considered with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities or high-quality private schools that have a curriculum developed for distance or hybrid education and can share or help to adapt content and methodologies to scale up in other schools, or that can contribute to teacher training. **Partnerships can also be sought with organizations working in education that can help to build the capacity of trained and motivated human talent**. For example, organizations such as Teach for All (present in 11 countries in the region) or high-quality universities can provide professionals or senior students, who are highly motivated and trained to support several of the tasks that will be required (tutoring, designing and adapting content, etc.). Finally, partnerships with telecommunications companies, and radio and television networks can help to increase access to content in different media. In any case, it is important that these partnerships are formed in an organized manner, to avoid duplicating efforts and so that they meet current needs.

Seeking partnerships can be a great **opportunity to promote cooperation between LAC countries, especially between those that share a common language**. International cooperation agencies such as UNDP, IDB, OEI and the World Bank, and international organizations such as Reduca or Summa, can play an especially important role in promoting and supporting regional initiatives. For example, as previously mentioned, the development of regional hubs or centres can be promoted. These would integrate high-quality materials and content that have already been tested, jointly develop new content, or promote the creation of content that can be used by different countries, depending on their predominant language. These regional centres could also be used for teacher training and to form teacher and school leader collaborative networks.

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[99] Modelling the budgetary impact of the actions required to overcome the region's education emergency is beyond the scope of this work. However, governments should collect the information required to estimate the resources needed to adapt schools and supplies to comply with the health safety requirements, hire additional teachers, expand connectivity, print and distribute materials, etc.

5.6. Managing the emergency with a view to the long term: rebuilding an effective education system for all

The challenges imposed by the current crisis have shown that we need to think differently moving forward, and build a better system than the previous one. This is now truer than ever for LAC. Prior to COVID-19, the region was already in the midst of a learning crisis and deeply unequal child and adolescent development opportunities. Governments are faced with the challenge of taking this crisis as an opportunity to transform a fractured education system, and to make a leap towards improving the quality of learning for all students. **Governments must work to overcome this emergency with a view to the long term: to move towards a system that ensures learning for all students, regardless of their place of birth or residence**. This involves planning and investing in at least three core elements: 1) closing the digital divide; 2) consolidating an educational model focused on student learning and that uses technology and teachers' time effectively; and 3) consolidating a high-quality body of teaching staff.

Universal internet access is needed to implement pedagogical innovations that use technology and therefore make quality education accessible to all. Furthermore, this will certainly not be the last emergency in the region, and countries will have to prepare themselves to ensure continuity in student learning in case they are forced to close schools again. It is an investment that will take time to implement, especially to reach the areas furthest from the urban centres, but it cannot be delayed. Therefore, a priority for the region in the coming years is to **plan to ensure universal internet coverage and the availability of electronic devices that provide access to digital platforms and content**. This will need extensive investment in infrastructure and devices, which in turn requires the promotion of cooperation between ministries of education and heads of information and communication technologies, as well as partnerships with telecommunications service operators.

Consolidating a student-centred teaching model requires **future investment in technology to be planned with a view to the long term, considering how the school will use digital platforms and content in an integrated manner for effective learning**. For example, investing in the development and adaptation of platforms and programmes that facilitate the constant monitoring of student learning and that use artificial intelligence to provide teachers with timely and accurate information on their students' achievements and difficulties in learning, so that they can offer more personalized pedagogical strategies, in line with student needs.[100] Plans should also be made to adopt digital adaptive learning tools to teach basic skills, such as math or reading, and to deliver content, pedagogical activities and feedback according to students' learning levels,[101] and which can later be integrated into projects, with the support of teachers. Moreover, any investment must prioritize digital platforms that enable communication and interaction with teachers and among students, the exchange of materials, and the monitoring and evaluation of students.

Technology has great potential for the advancement of high-quality education. However, it is not a substitute for teachers. The constant interaction between students and their teachers is fundamental for learning development, particularly for highly complex and non-cognitive skills such as self-regulation, empathy and independence. This is an opportunity to consider what kind of teacher is needed by education systems in LAC and, more so, what kind of training teachers require to be able to take up the challenge of training well-rounded students with the skills required to reach their full potential. The region is facing a challenge that will take years to overcome, and that is enhancing the professional skills of teachers. While this issue will not be resolved in the next two years, countries in region can still make strategic investments in the short term to strengthen initial and in-service teacher training programmes.

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100 For example: Khan Academy.

101 For example: Mindspark (see details in Muralidharan, K., A. Singh, and A. Ganimian. 'Disrupting education? Experimental Evidence on Technology-Aided Instruction in India'. American Economic Review, vol. 109, No. 4, 1426–1460, April 2019).

6.   Conclusions

We are experiencing a crisis that is unprecedented in recent human history. The COVID19 pandemic has forced governments to take drastic measures that seek to contain infection rates and protect the lives of millions of people. While these measures were necessary in the short term to address the health emergency, it is important to restore the long-term vision with regard to the costs measures may carry for future generations. The closure of schools, combined with the lockdown and economic crisis, will have a negative impact on the current and future development of children, and may further widen the gaps that existed before the pandemic. This pandemic hit LAC at a time of crisis in learning and unequal development opportunities for children and adolescents. While governments have made efforts to sustain student learning and ensure their well-being, strategies have not reached students equally, in part due to pre-existing inequities in accessing resources, such as internet connection, device availability and enabling environments for growth and learning.

In the midst of the crisis, uncertainty, and fear generated by the reopening of sectors, it is important to focus the discussion on the present and future well-being of children and adolescents, and to do everything possible to ensure that they continue their cognitive and emotional development process. This involves focusing efforts on the most vulnerable and planning to gradually reopen schools as soon as the health emergency allows. While schools are closed, and once the reopening process begins, the emotional well-being of students must be ensured and learning processes must continue. This requires strong leadership from the ministries of education and a national commitment to protect and secure the resources needed to protect the human capital of an entire generation.

The pandemic revealed profound inequalities in human development opportunities in LAC. The crisis poses great challenges for education systems in the region. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to rethink the meaning of school, the fundamental role played by teachers, the use of technology to foster learning, and to build a solid system that drives the quality of education for all children and adolescents in the region.

Annex

■ **Table A1.** Number of students affected, by education level

Country	Pre-primary	Primary	Secondary	Total	Decision	Date of closure	Duration of national closure (days)
Anguilla	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not closed	N/A	N/A
Antigua and Barbuda	2,050	10,123	7,856	20,029	National closure	19 March	135
Argentina	1,694,680	4,753,843	4,612,663	11,061,186	National closure	15 March	139
Bahamas	3,594	29,504	26,884	59,982	National closure	16 March	138
Barbados	5,320	20,218	19,571	45,109	National closure	19 March	135
Belize	7,349	50,764	40,353	98,466	National closure	18 March	136
Bolivia	353,898	1,379,099	1,233,738	2,966,735	National closure	12 March	142
Brazil	5,101,935	16,106,812	23,118,179	44,326,926	National closure	17 March	137
British Virgin Islands	767	3,334	2,255	6,356	National closure	17 March	137
Chile	616,615	1,514,761	1,520,724	3,652,100	National closure	13 March	141
Colombia	1,309,386	4,303,833	4,821,029	10,434,248	National closure	15 March	139
Costa Rica	14,344	483,770	476,668	974,782	National closure	17 March	137
Cuba	370,468	741,269	795,057	1,906,794	National closure	23 March	131
Dominica	1,668	7,323	5,561	14,552	National closure	23 March	131
Dominican Republic	299,149	1,226,414	924,714	2,450,277	National closure	17 March	137
Ecuador	638,551	1,932,261	1,891,648	4,462,460	National closure until 15 July – targeted reopening	16 March	121 (138)
El Salvador	230,010	662,740	521,576	1,414,326	National closure	11 March	143
Guatemala	603,637	2,362,116	1,227,191	4,192,944	National closure	16 March	138
Grenada	3,698	13,195	9,135	26,028	National closure	15 March	139
Haiti	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,210,221	National closure	20 March	134
Guyana	27,872	94,488	85,934	208,294	National closure	16 March	138
Honduras	245,010	1,123,945	655,090	2,024,045	National closure	12 March	142
Jamaica	103,220	248,836	200,563	552,619	National closure	13 March	141
Mexico	4,942,523	14,182,288	14,034,552	33,159,363	National closure	20 March	134
Montserrat	85	460	317	862	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nicaragua	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not closed	N/A	N/A
Panama	95,481	418,852	322,913	837,246	National closure	11 March	143
Paraguay	181,007	727,363	611,308	1,519,678	National closure – Government announced closure until the end of the school year	10 March	144
Peru	1,642,768	3,592,865	2,779,973	8,015,606	National closure	12 March	142
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1,275	5,452	4,175	10,902	National closure	27 March	127
Saint Lucia	3,259	15,874	11,792	30,925	National closure	16 March	138
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	N/A	N/A	N/A	25,520	Targeted closure	20 March	134
Suriname	18,150	67,690	58,408	144,248	National closure until 31 May – targeted from then on	16 March	138
Trinidad and Tobago	29,585	131,350	105,381	266,316	National closure	16 March	138
Turks and Caicos Islands	1,077	3,680	2,316	7,073	National closure	19 March	135
Uruguay	N/A	N/A	N/A	956,304	National closure until 22 April, then targeted closure until 29 June when there was a general reopening	16 March	37 (105 until all schools reopened)
Venezuela	1,190,349	3,285,299	2,391,174	6,866,822	National closure	13 March	141
Latin America and the Caribbean	19,738,780	59,499,821	62,518,698	144,949,344			

*Cut-off date: 1 August 2020.
Source: World Bank, UNESCO, Center for Global Development, UNICEF LACRO (Latin American And Caribbean Region Office) Education Section and the Presidency of Uruguay.

■ **Table A2.** Interventions in Latin American and Caribbean countries to implement distance education

Country	Tools for students	Media			Parental guide	Parental guide details	Tools for teachers
		Online	Radio	TV			
Antigua and Barbuda	Implementation of online courses for secondary education, and creation of an online blog for each primary school.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Articles on supporting students with distance education	
Aruba	The Ministry of Education set up online platforms.	Yes	No	No	No		
Argentina (television)	Educational programmes are available on public television and radio. These are also delivered via online platforms and teacher training.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No		Online platforms for teachers to learn about how virtual classrooms work, among others.
Bahamas	The Ministry of Education launched live online primary and secondary schools.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Guides for online learning and the Ministry of Education's online portal.	Online resources for teachers from preschool through to eighth grade.
Barbados	Implementation of distance learning through Google Classroom.	Yes	No	No	No		Online platform with videos for some subjects, such as health and mathematics, among others.
Belize	Implementation of home learning programmes through online tools and teacher training programmes.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Information published in the Ministry of Education.	Provision of reading or online materials for teachers to enable the continuity of the learning process.
Bolivia	Implementation of online platforms.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Handbook available for students, parents and teachers.	Teacher training through a partnership with Microsoft Bolivia.
Brazil	Most states have used television channels and online tools to disseminate class content. The material has also been printed for households without internet access.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Guides focused on family learning and online training courses for home study support.	Free online courses to support the learning process for distance students.
Chile	Online learning platforms.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Online resources for parents and students.	Platforms that facilitate training for teachers in the use of online distance education tools.
Colombia	Digital learning strategies through online, television and radio programmes. For students without internet access, a home learning kit has been prepared. Resources have also been created to engage families in home learning.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Resources to engage families in home learning.	
Costa Rica	Online platform and televised support for organizing online learning.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online materials or television broadcasts, including resources for working with students with disabilities.	One-week online tools training programme.
Cuba	Distance learning through television and an online platform.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A		Individual and small-groups teacher training.
Dominica	Online distance education and through printed materials for students without internet access.	Yes	No	No	N/A		
Dominican Republic	Online learning through online platforms, radio and television. Installation of over 1,000 internet access stations.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	YouTube guides for parents on distance learning.	
Ecuador	Online platform to disseminate materials for students.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Resources for parents available online.	Online resources focused on supporting the learning process.
El Salvador	Online platform and television broadcasts, as well as a call centre, accessible by phone and mail, to provide support on accessing education activities.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Resources available online and a call centre to support parents.	Material to guide parents and students in the learning process.
Guatemala	Courses broadcast on television and radio every day.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Parent guides to online home schooling.	Platforms and libraries are available with resources for teacher training.
Grenada	Online distance learning.	Yes	No	No	N/A		
Guyana	Dissemination of educational content through television, radio and online platforms.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Resources for parents available online.	Advice on the learning process for teachers.

Haiti	Design of online platforms.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	UNICEF has created videos for parents on how to deal with the current crisis.	The National Early Childhood Commission has supported teachers through WhatsApp and online media.
Honduras	Students receive their classes through a television signal.	Yes	No	Yes	No		
British Virgin Islands	Implementation of teaching through digital media. The Ministry of Education has focused on providing technological resources to households that lack these resources.	Yes	No	No	No		
Cayman Islands	Implementation of techniques and tools to ensure that the students' learning process continues.	Yes	No	No	Yes	Instructions for parents to achieve a distraction-free environment to sustain learning.	
Turks and Caicos Islands	Organization of online education by education centres.	Yes	No	No	No		
Jamaica	Distance education through online platforms, radio, television and printed materials.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Materials to maintain the organization and continuation of the learning process.	
Mexico	Dissemination of content through online platforms and television. Digital training courses for teachers.	Yes	No	Yes	No		Access to a space with reading materials and videos on various topics for teacher training.
Panama	Dissemination of content through radio, television and digital platforms.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Online guides to home schooling.	Training to manage the online classroom.
Paraguay	Online platform	Yes	No	Yes	No		
Peru	School materials available online and on television.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Constant online publications on home schooling.	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Teacher training and distance education programmes through television and Internet.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Encouraging students to do their schoolwork.	
Saint Lucia	The Ministry of Education enabled online learning.	Yes	No	No	No		
Suriname	Distance education published daily.	Yes	No	Yes	N/A		
Trinidad and Tobago	The Ministry of Education has created an online learning portal and provided computers to students without access to them.	Yes	No	No	No		
Uruguay	Online platform available.	Yes	No	No	No		Platform for teachers to share positive experiences of training on using the tools.

Source: Created based on data collected by UNICEF, each country's Ministry of Education, the Center for Global Development and the websites cited in the table.

■ **Table A3.** Government interventions for child and youth mental health support

Country	Aimed at	Intervention
Argentina	General	Guide with recommendations for mental health professionals to provide assistance through the telephone and online.
Bahamas	Children	Access to counselling through the Virtual Learning platform.
Barbados	Children	UNICEF office discussions on psychosocial support for children.
Belize	Teachers	First Aid for Feelings workbook to help children alleviate stress and anxiety and to provide tools to keep in control during isolation.
Bolivia	General	Information helpline on mental health issues. However, this is not therapy. It is focused on children and people acting as caregivers in the pandemic.
Brazil	Parents and caregivers	Booklet with recommendations on emotionally supporting children during the pandemic.
Chile	Teachers	Learning and advice guides for teachers to support students with specific needs and in situations of emotional exhaustion and stress.
	Parents and caregivers	Guidelines for creating study routines, setting an example of self-care and positive language at home.
Colombia	Parents, caregivers and children	Portal with a collection of documents on caring for the socioemotional stability of children based on studies from various sources, such as universities and UNICEF, etc. It also has violence and telemedicine helplines.
Cuba	Teachers and parents	Partnership between the UNICEF office and UNESCO to disseminate material on psychosocial support during epidemics.
Ecuador	General	Portal with instructions for detecting symptoms of mental health problems, self-care recommendations, and a free helpline for psychological and emotional support. Content has also been broadcast on television to promote mental health at home.
	Parents	Guidelines on providing emotional support to students (UNICEF).
El Salvador	Students	Identification of good socioemotional practices to implement the emergency support tools. Production and dissemination of these materials. This was carried out with the support of UNICEF.
Guatemala	Students, teachers and parents	Psychosocial and emotional support through different media such as videos and readers. The material includes tips for mediation and to resolve family conflicts.
	Students and parents	Blog with posts by education experts on psychosocial support (UNICEF).
Honduras	Students	Support the provision of psychosocial support (UNICEF).
Jamaica	Students	Health care centre and hospital helplines.
Mexico	General and children	Portal with information on mental health risks in the current context and helplines. There are child-care helplines focused on training for parents and caregivers and other helplines to provide direct support for children.
	Parents and young people	Communication of material on socioemotional work at home. Work has also been done with education communities on mental health and psychosocial support (UNICEF).
Nicaragua	Students	Partnership between the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to provide socioemotional support to students.
Panama	Parents	Guide on routines, habits and emotional management (UNICEF).
Uruguay	General	Free helpline provided by mental health and psychology professionals.
	Parents	Psycho-emotional support guide and organization of webinars with specialists to provide support to parents.
Venezuela	General	Dissemination of a campaign through television, radio and social networks, focusing on emotional well-being and maintaining emotional balance.
	Caregivers and children	Information on mental health and psychosocial support (UNICEF) and workshops.

Sources: Ministries of Education, Ministries of Health and UNICEF Country Office & Government COVID-19 Education Actions.

■ **Table A4.** Types of resources and platforms for distance learning, by use and required technology

| Resources and platforms	Use					Minimum technology required
	Content	Guidance for use/ application of content	Monitoring and feedback on learning	Interaction with the teacher	Interaction with classmates/group work	
Printed books/stories	✓					Papel
Readers/workbooks/guides	✓	✓				
Text messages or calls				✓		Basic mobile phone
Audiobooks	✓					MP3/mobile phone
Video classes/educational programmes/ documentaries	✓					TV or DVD player
WhatsApp/social networks				✓	✓	Mobile phone with data access
Communication platforms (e.g. Zoom, Google Hangouts)				✓	✓	
Digital books/stories	✓		✓*			Mobile phone with internet connection or tablet with uploaded content
Games/apps	✓		✓*			
Complete courses with content, sequences, exercises, etc. (e.g. Kolibri)	✓	✓	✓			
Complete courses with content, sequences, exercises, etc. (e.g. Khan Academy)	✓	✓	✓			Tablet, computer with internet connection
Virtual classrooms (with teacher) e.g. Google Classroom, Moodle, Schoology	✓**	✓**	✓**	✓	✓	

*Possible if there is internet connection
**Requires involvement of teacher to include content, student guidance, and monitoring and feedback of learning.
See resource repositories and platforms available at: UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, Education Above All, and Enseña por México.

■ **Figure A1.** Pre-primary enrolment
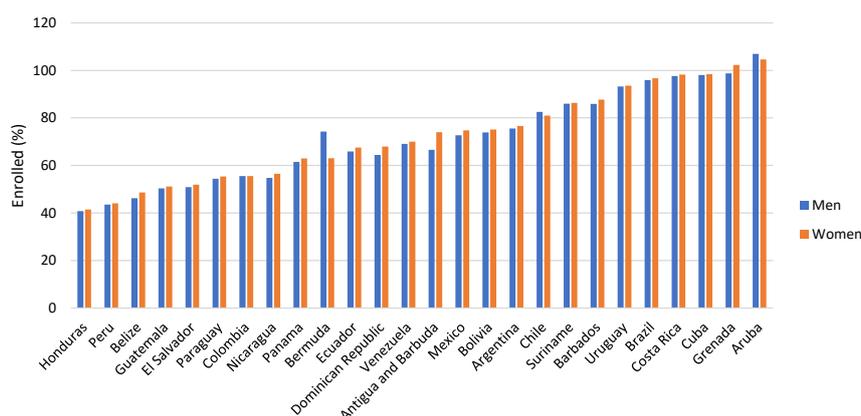
Note: The data were taken from the latest year with available information. For Nicaragua: 2010; Colombia: 2011; Aruba: 2014; Bermuda: 2015; Paraguay: 2016; Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Suriname, Venezuela and Uruguay: 2017; Antigua, Barbados, Barbuda, Belize, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala and Peru: 2018. By pre-primary, UIS refers to initial organized educational programmes that are designed to introduce children over 3 years old to the school environment.
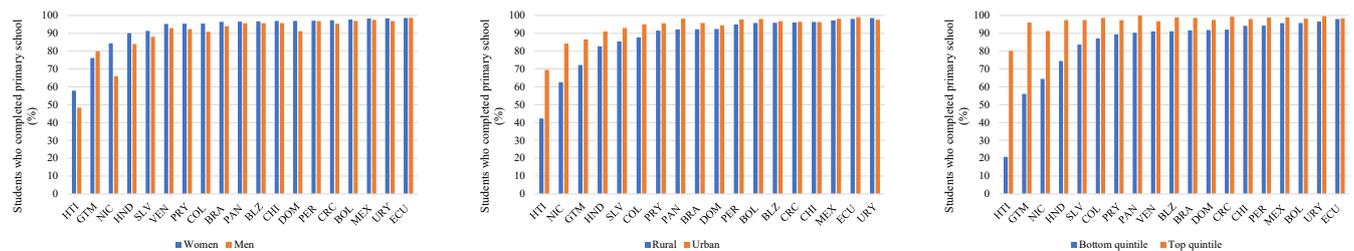
Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS).

■ **Figure A2.** Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 test results by quintiles of socio-economic level
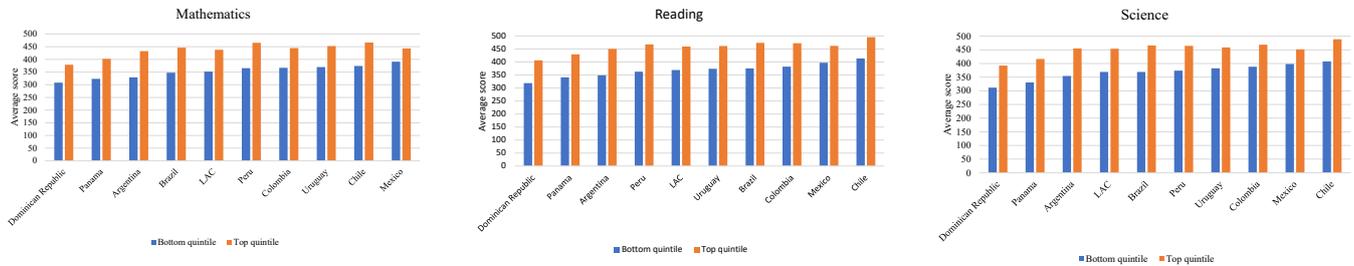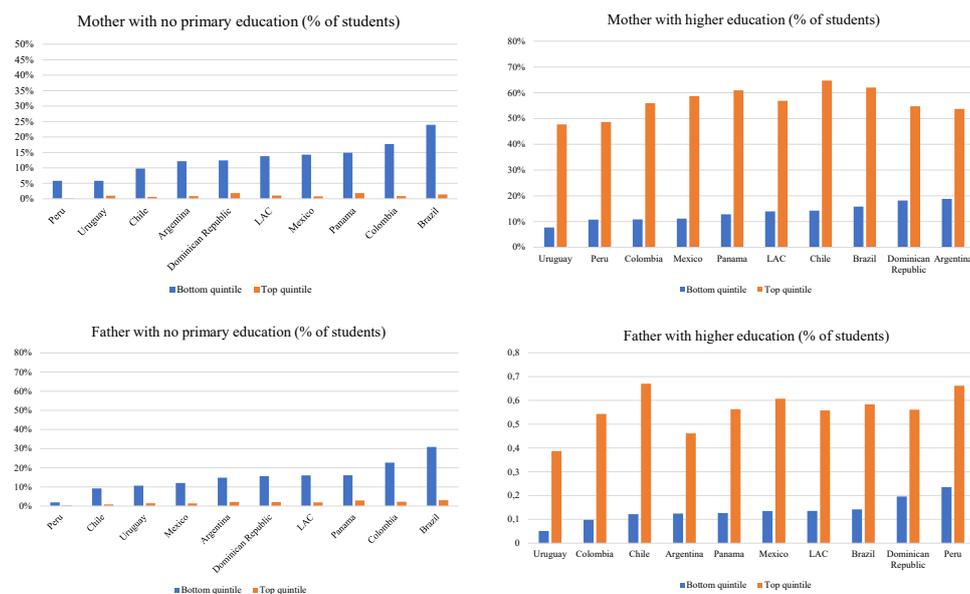

Note: Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of assets in students' households. These assets include electronic goods and the number of rooms in the house, among other things. Only countries in Latin America are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs.

■ **Figure A3.** Primary school completion by gender, area and socio-economic level in 2018

Note: Due to a lack of data, the data reported are from 2017 for Chile and Haiti, 2016 for Belize, 2015 for Guatemala, and 2014 for Nicaragua and Venezuela. Source: Education-UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

■ **Figure A4.** Parental education by socio-economic level of household

Note: Quintiles are based on an index which measures the possession of assets in students' households. These assets include electronic goods and the number of rooms in the house, among other things. Only countries in LAC are taken into consideration when calculating the quintile to which each household belongs.

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