

UNICEF Education & COVID-19 Case Study

Brazil – Preparing for an integrated school reopening to address children’s comprehensive needs

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In Brazil, most schools have shut their doors since mid-March 2020, depriving more than [5.5 million children and adolescents](#) of their normal schooling. This has led to an astonishing [20-year setback](#) for education in the country. Remote learning has presented a deep-rooted challenge in the country, since [4.8 million children and adolescents](#) aged 9 to 17 lack access to the internet at home. The pandemic exacerbated already existing educational inequities, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups including children and adolescents of African and indigenous heritage, those from other traditional communities, children with disabilities, and boys and girls who have fled Venezuela.

Reopening has been uneven. While some schools began opening back up in August 2020, in the absence of a national school reopening plan, there is a patchwork of decisions made at the municipal and state levels. In 2020, only 12 out of 27 states [reopened schools](#), and when the second wave of the pandemic hit the country in February 2021, health systems collapsed and most schools shuttered again. Due to the highly decentralized system in Brazil, it remains challenging to monitor accurately how many schools have reopened.

As of May 2021, most students are relying on remote learning. UNICEF Brazil is focusing on high-level advocacy for the safer reopening of schools, including the procurement of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies for schools and development of COVID-19 risk communication materials such as posters, videos, guides, radio spots and social media posts for school managers, teachers and students. With support from the Barça Foundation, UNICEF has also adapted the existing [School Active Search](#) (SAS) tool in Brazil to increase schools’ engagement and bring back every child who has missed out on learning during the pandemic, including those enrolled in school but unable to access remote platforms. For more detail, watch [this video](#) (in Portuguese).

RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Bringing out-of-school children back to learning through multisectoral partnerships.** Established in 2017, SAS is a free methodology and online tool in Brazil that helps national and subnational governments in identifying, registering and monitoring children and adolescents aged 4 -17 who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. In partnership with municipal education, health, and social welfare managers, the technology allows local authorities to understand what is preventing them from attending school and use this data to improve enrollment and attendance rates. By 6 May 2021, 2,126 municipalities (39 per cent) and 23 states were using the platform and have re-enrolled over 80,000 children since SAS's inception. Over 36,000 of these children were re-enrolled during the COVID-19 crisis. Since March 2020, UNICEF has helped train over 9,000 stakeholders in the SAS strategy through hands-on training sessions in Semiárid, Legal Amazon and Southeast priority territories. In addition, 7,438 people completed a UNICEF-supported massive SAS online open course.
- **Education prevents violence.** To promote a safer return to schools, UNICEF developed [materials](#) that address mental health and psychosocial care; identification, prevention and referrals in cases of suspected violence; and the role of the local child protection system in the SAS. UNICEF also implemented online trainings to support integrated action between schools and zonal offices upon the return to in-person learning. The online short courses reached over 5,500 people from more than 83 Brazilian cities in 24 different states, whose work touches an estimated 300,000 children and adolescents.
- **Making information available for all.** [UNICEF Brazil's website](#) is populated with documents, guidelines and tools to support education managers and school communities in making informed decisions about school reopening. This page is continually updated with the most recent resources from UNICEF and partners, and how some of these materials are being used for the safer reopening of schools will be monitored.
- **Children on the move need particular attention.** In 2020, UNICEF produced and disseminated COVID-19 prevention messages integrating health, education, protection and WASH, directly reaching more than 20,000 refugees and migrants. In the states of Roraima and Amazonas, UNICEF worked with state and municipal education departments in the active search for refugee and migrant students. As a result, more than 250 children and adolescents were enrolled in the Amazonas public school system. Also, through partnerships with AM and FM commercial radio stations, the radio programme "Súper Panas na Rádio" carried daily educational content in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic for 2,000 refugee and migrant families with children, offering programming in Spanish, Portuguese and Warao. UNICEF Brazil helped produce 71 programmes.

NEXT STEPS

In April 2021, UNICEF Brazil released a [guide](#) with recommendations for local authorities in health and education to assess the COVID-19 situation in their state and municipality in order to plan and promote the safe reopening of schools. Together with other UN agencies and international organizations, UNICEF Brazil is currently organising a conference in early June 2021 advocating for the immediate safe reopening of schools.

Cost effectiveness

Since 2017, UNICEF Brazil's investment in the School Active Search is valued at approximately US \$950,000. During the current COVID-19 crisis, with support from the Barça Foundation, SAS was adapted and helped re-enrol an estimated 36,000 learners who were out of school or at risk of drop out.

For more information, please contact

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