



COVID-19 Response

Rapide programmatic response to the COVID-19
crisis in 2020

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Response to the COVID-19 crisis

Framework and scope of action

Since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020, Educo began its immediate response to the crisis in the countries of operation, in coordination with the actors with whom we work and humanitarian agencies.

The response was based on the detection of the needs of the populations on the ground, and was aligned with our [Global Impact Framework 2020-2030](#) and the [ChildFund Alliance's COVID-19 Response Plan](#). Continuous close monitoring of the country context allowed us to respond to the main needs of the populations we work with, adapting our programmes quickly.

The main areas of work were as follows:

Area 1: Stop COVID-19 from infecting children and families

- Installing community handwashing stands
- Educating communities about symptoms, hygiene measures and where to get tested or treatment
- Distributing soap, hand sanitizer, gloves and masks to families and frontline health worker

Area 2: Ensure that children get the food they need

- Providing cash for families that most need support
- Distributing food and other basic supplies directly
- Distributing hygiene kits

Area 3: Keep children safe from violence — physically and emotionally

- Supporting community-based child protection systems that identify, respond to and refer cases of abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation
- Providing virtual, online psycho-social first aid and counseling
- Advocacy efforts

Area 4: Help children continue learning

- Conducting activities and tutoring over phone, online or through radio
- Distributing home learning materials and guidelines for their use

During the first quarter of the crisis, in most cases the evolution of the pandemic exceeded what was foreseen at the time of project planning. Interventions focused on rapid response and first response activities, such as food distribution, hygiene and recreational kits, and awareness raising.

During the second and third quarter (July-December 2020) an evolution of the intervention typology was observed. Projects focused more on medium-term response, recovery and the humanitarian-development nexus (cash transfer, psychosocial support, livelihoods, education in emergencies). This period also saw the

emergence of more externally funded projects, as a result of coordination with different actors, humanitarian clusters and donors.

The overall scope of the response, from March to the end of December 2020, was as follows:



Achievements and impacts

During the implementation of the COVID-19 response projects, achievements and impacts have been reported on a quarterly basis. The impacts reported have been broken down into positive or negative, intended or unintended impacts.

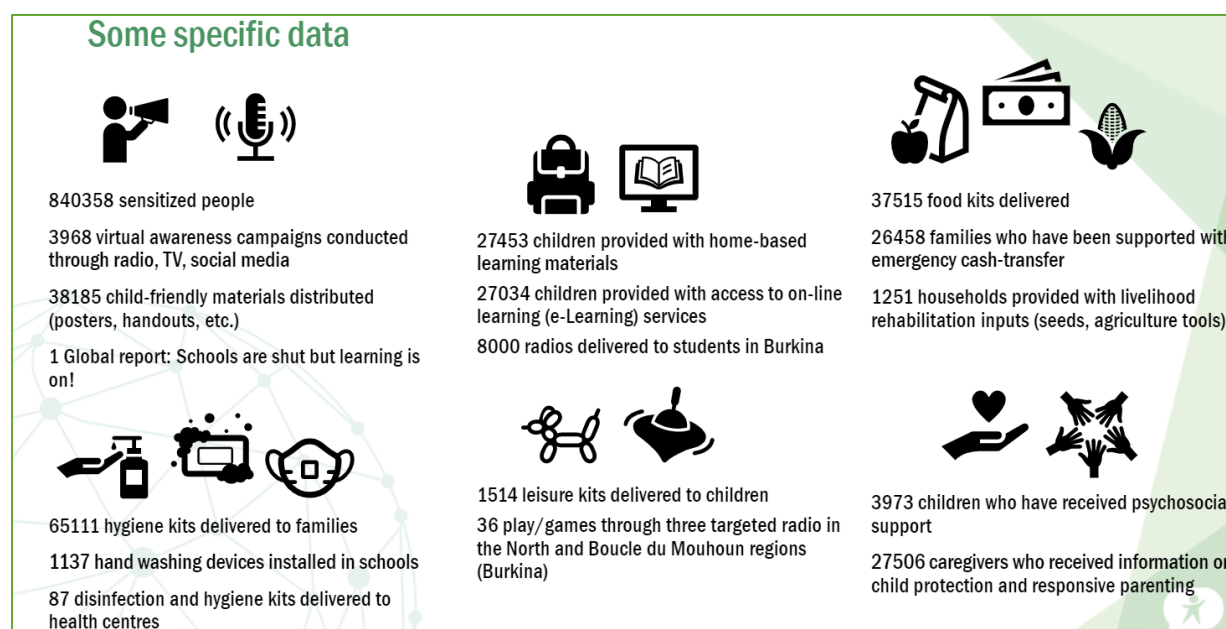
The main achievements and impacts can be summarized as follows:

- Improved access to basic food items, raising the standard of living of families. Family representatives reduced their level of stress and concern about lack of food for family members. Cash also helped them to purchase food, baby food, cloth, medicine, and different grocery. Best suited to family needs when there is item support from other organizations.
- Families practice hygiene measures and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Didactic materials and online materials have allowed children and adolescents to continue studying and learning despite schools were closed due to the pandemic. The active support of their parents was key, since they promoted the homebased education of their children. Parent organizations motivated to participate in the educational processes for the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Family play time was promoted through items that were delivered in a play kit, especially among children and adolescents.

- Psychosocial support and the implementation of infection prevention measures after the reopening of classes in some countries (Benin, Mali)
- Among the unintended positive impacts, the following stand out:
 - More cohesion in the Educo team.
 - Positioning as humanitarian actor both towards children and their families, and towards networks, institutions and donors.
 - Gaining experience in the use of cash transfer in crisis contexts.

Some of the most successful activities include:

- Awareness-raising activities and hygiene kits, handwashing to stop the pandemic from spreading.
- Delivery of meals and food kits to vulnerable families, which helped to avoid cases of extreme vulnerability and alleviated tension and stress.
- Delivery of cash transfers, which was well adapted to the needs of the families and has been a great learning experience for Educo in building expertise.
- Use of radios and school supplies to follow distance education.
- Detection of cases in need of psychosocial support for accompaniment and referrals.



Difficulties encountered

The pandemic situation at the global level presented some difficulties in implementing planned actions:

- **Limitations in field implementation:** Limitations on travel (special permits, sometimes limited to a few days), awareness raising and access to communities. Limitations on face-to-face monitoring, evaluation and accountability.
- **The situation exceeded plans**, and in some projects, it was not possible to meet all the needs of the population.
- **Lack of stock** of hygiene and cleaning items on the market.
- **Teams** have been **affected** by the situation and the work overload. All the teams were affected and had difficult family situations, especially those with children or dependents, since there were no schools or care institutions available.
- **Digitalization** and remote work were not yet firmly institutionalized when the pandemic started, so some tools and work dynamics had to be adjusted.
- Some **institutional partners were not as available** due to their own workload in the direct response to the pandemic.

Factors that enabled rapid responses and successful intervention

Despite the difficulties encountered, the analysis of our intervention has shown that there were different factors that allowed the response to be successful:

- Existing **security and crisis management system**, with pre-established mechanisms, protocols, decision-making bodies and tools, which facilitated rapid implementation through:
 - Setting up a Crisis Management Team at Head Quarters and Country offices level enabling ensuring agility in decision-making and reactivity (with security focal points in countries)
 - Strategy and actions aimed at improving and strengthening internal communication on crisis management (sitreps, meetings, information dissemination, etc)
 - Designing and forecasting escalation over time according to context to ensure the highest degree of operability according to the intensity at each stage of the crisis.

- Use of context analysis and risk management approach from the outset of pandemic management, with good analysis and continuous monitoring of the context in each country.
- **Adapting development programs**, knowledge of the area and actors, with whom we have been working with.
- **Redirection of internal funds**: we implemented a faster and more agile system than usual to redirect our own funds to Covid response.
- **Speedy decision making** and internal management.
- New external funding opportunities.
- Availability and enthusiasm of teams.

Advocacy

Our advocacy work and raising the voice of children and adolescents during the crisis has also been important.

Our report "[Schools are shut but learning is on! Confinement and the new normality post COVID-explained by children from around the world](#)" was important in this regard, using an online global survey, to understand what children and young people are experiencing during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The study has focused on key elements that allowed us an initial insight into what children missed during the period of restrictions on leaving their homes, whether they had positive opinions about the situation, how they imagined their future and why, and the possibility of sending a message to their peers.

The findings were presented in a webinar organized by the Childfund Alliance with 250 attendees including representatives from NGOs, Inter-governmental Organizations, UN Missions, Government Ministries and young people. The event elicited a high level of positive engagement on social media. It has also been published in a major newspaper in Spain.

At the country level, the following actions are noteworthy:

- Being a member of **Joining Forces Alliance**, Educo participated two virtual dialogue sessions, on children's mental health on COVID situation and on violence against children.
- Training of **Guatemalan congressmen** as part of the actions of the Joining Forces coalition, trained on issues of protection, education and participation of children as subjects of rights.
- Bangladesh: Educo is a member of the Child Rights Advocacy Coalition Bangladesh (CRAC'B), who carried out awareness and advocacy actions on COVID through social networkss campaign.

Learnings and best practices

Lessons learned

Field teams and partner organizations have reported lessons learned from implementing:

- **Kit distribution strategy:** The database should be kept updated, not only of children but also of parents to be benefited in an emerging project (and telephone list).
- **Purchasing:** The direct involvement of the staff of the purchasing area was strategic. More human resources and time must be allocated to the purchase of products and packaging.
- **Cash transfer:**
 - Both beneficiaries and stakeholders recognized, cash support as more relevant and appropriate. Because by cash beneficiaries could purchase/meet essential need as per their requirement. Moreover, there was no scope of duplication of commodities/goods with others because it is cash.
 - Cash transfer facilitators series of meetings, coaching and mentoring will help the project team to facilitate all the necessary coordination, support, and provide guidance and instructions to their co-members on cash transfer implementation.
 - Coordination: Coordination with municipal referents, leaders, who know the participants, increases the level of trust and impartiality, considering the particular situations of each family. Coordination with delegates from the Ministry of Education, principals and teachers responsible for the schools is key to guaranteeing the calls, which must be made with prior planning and due anticipation in order to ensure that all parents attend.
- The presence of **community volunteers** keeps the community informed and involved.
- **Psychosocial and well-being:** The psychosocial accompaniment accompanied by food assistance is perceived positively by the affected families.
- Implementing the **Crisis management Protocol** allows agile decisions-making

Best practices

Good practices have also been systematized and analyzed for possible replication in other contexts and projects:

- **Adaptation:** All the country projects took advantage of their planned activities from the formulation stage to adapt them to the global pandemic context
- **Protocols:** Specific COVID Standard Operational Procedures to conduct field and in office work. For instance, physical distance was maintained in distributions, staff wore masks and gloves, and avoided

crowding (cited in small groups). Use of mobile and online platform for coordination and meeting to minimize spreading the virus.

- **Product deliveries and logistics:** different strategies to avoid the rush and chaos (nearby locations were set up and parents were called to receive the materials, organization of agendas and transportation with the support of the municipalities). Adaptation to the context and needs: e.g. in Bangladesh payments were made in batches of 500 to avoid risk; in Spain were delivered according to need/management capacity: cooked meals, or purse cards or vouchers to buy in local commerce.
- **Accountability:** Delivery of minutes with unit prices and total costs of solidarity baskets, for each community through the municipal referent. Use of social networks and internet for the promotion of the project and dissemination of the progress of the activities and achievements of the project.
- **Use of community focal points** for kit delivery, community awareness and monitoring, data collection.
- Delivery of the kits accompanied by **educational workshops** that included posters and educational brochures for schools and communities.
- **Post distribution monitoring** (PDM) conducted: important monitoring and accountability tool to know results and feedback of the community.
- **Systematization of data** during the whole period, Life Stories and Photos.
- An **internal mid-term evaluation** was conducted on the **management of the Covid-19 crisis**, including analysis by several members and surveys with countries. As a product we have a final report of this evaluation, which has been disseminated internally.



Recommendations

Based on the analysis of Educo's programme interventions in response to the COVID-19 crisis, it is recommended that the following aspects be reinforced and monitored:

- **Crisis management:** Continue implementing the Crisis and Security Management System, incorporating the recommendations established in the mid-term evaluation of COVID-19 management, such as the reinforcement of context and risk analysis, or the permanent updating of roles and responsibilities in crisis management.
- **Identification of needs:**
 - Progress must be made in the establishment of guidelines and protocols for the rapid detection of the needs of populations in the event of a crisis.
 - A gender approach should be included in the needs assessment, ensuring that the material and strategic needs of women and girls are specifically included.
- **Planning, project adaptation and budgeting:**
 - Improve the traceability of pre-existing project activities that have been adapted to respond to the crisis
 - Maintain a high degree of flexibility and rapid response in decision making to respond to the crisis.
 - Improve the dissemination of ChildFund Alliance response plans, to ensure that they are working as planned, and that they take advantage of possible synergies between members.
 - It is recommended to assess the possibility of having an emergency bag for possible emergencies, both internally at Educo and at the ChildFund Alliance level.
- **Programmatic intervention:**
 - The situation of access to educational institutions and school maintenance caused by the pandemic and educational cuts will need to be studied, and education projects should be adapted to respond to current issues
 - Attention should be given to mitigating the risks introduced by the pandemic in terms of child protection, particularly in relation to cases of violence and child labor.
 - The use of information technologies or remote study methodologies (such as radios or specific materials) should be reinforced, taking into account the digital divide and establishing actions to mitigate it.
 - Strengthen child participation and accountability in contexts of crisis and humanitarian action.
- **Procurement and logistics processes in emergency situations:** There should be agile protocols for procurement and logistical procedures for the distribution of items. More human and time resources need to be planned for this.

- **Cash transfer:**
 - Capitalise on cash transfer experiences
 - Have a conceptual guide and guidelines for implementation, and adequate monitoring of compliance with standards.
 - Ensure that the selection of beneficiaries involves community participation.

- **Data management, monitoring, evaluation and accountability:**
 - Databases of project participants should be kept up to date, not only for children but also for their families, so that they can be traced in case of urgent need.
 - Compliance with monitoring and reporting standards for humanitarian action projects, and adherence to pre-established timelines, should be strengthened.
 - Continue to make progress in rapid assessment methodologies in emergency situations, such as Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM), rapid assessments, management evaluations.
 - Strengthen accountability towards the different actors involved. Methodologies adapted to the situation, context and age should be used.
 - Replicate in other crises the methodology of systematisation of data and learning, and its dissemination, which has been highly valued and important for communication, fundraising, accountability and decision making.

- **Coordination and participation:**
 - Educo should be part of humanitarian clusters in the country and region.
 - Maintain good coordination with thematic clusters, international and local organisations, local institutions and communities, for coordinated and relevant humanitarian action
 - Having community volunteers or focal points in the community to facilitate communication and engagement
 - The participation of different actors should be included in all phases of the response, from needs assessment to evaluation and accountability.

- **Expertise:**
 - It is recommended to have an international pool of staff specialised in emergency response who can provide methodological and strategic support in a short period of time when designing interventions.
 - The training of Educo teams and partners in humanitarian action should be strengthened.

"Schools are shut, learning is on! Playgrounds are closed but playing isn't! Cinemas are closed, but the television is on! Restaurants are closed, but your mother's kitchen is open! We will stay home for longer. Always remember that life is much more than just going out! Remember this to make your stay at home safe!" (Boy, Bangladesh)
