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# PLAY, LAUGH AND LEARN

How World Vision Bolivia supported education access during COVID 19 through interactive, participatory, and play-based activities

In response to COVID-19, governments around the world closed schools to curb the spread of the virus. In Bolivia schools remained closed for approximately 69 weeks because of COVID-19, one of the longest closures in both the LAC region and in the world.<sup>1</sup> According to the World Bank, in 2021 the dropout rate in Bolivia is projected to reach 20% due largely to the residual effects of COVID-19, placing it among one of the highest dropout rates in Latin America and the Caribbean. Preliminary evidence suggests that learning loss for students in Bolivia, as measured through basic reading literacy, will likely decrease significantly due to the pandemic.

**WORLD VISION BOLIVIA (WVB)** implements pre-primary, primary and secondary education activities through 36 Area Programmes across seven of Bolivia's nine departments (states). Much of WV Bolivia's pre-primary and primary education programs focus on developing early literacy and literacy skills using WV's Learning Roots and Unlock Literacy models. When COVID-19 hit, the Ministry of Education (MOE) initially focused its efforts on virtual learning modalities. However, most students in WV programme areas come from rural areas, where only approximately three percent of households have access to internet.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, 2021

According to WVB's National Education Specialist, given the foundational importance of literacy for overall learning outcomes, the WVB team focused many of its COVID-19 mitigation efforts on reinforcing basic literacy and mathematics skills among **PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**. The approach also included a strong socio-emotional focus to address the trauma and fear of the pandemic and a significant focus on play-based learning.

**“Play is an important tool... We know that play strengthens neurological response, which can lead to significant learning”.**

The team also knew that for these activities to be effective within the context of lockdown, they would require the active support of parents. At the same time, given the challenges the team had previously faced in achieving meaningful parental or caregiver support, they also understood that effective parental engagement would require highly interactive and easy-to-use tools. Thus, one of WV Bolivia's key Covid-19 responses was born: **PLAY, LAUGH and LEARN!**

<sup>2</sup> Reuters, 2020

# KEY COMPONENTS OF THE APPROACH



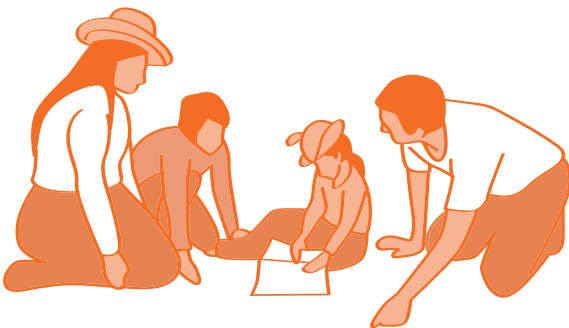
## Development of Play-Based Lesson Plans

WV work with teachers to develop a series of simple, age-appropriate mathematics, language/literacy, and socio-emotional lesson plans aligned with the national curriculum and MoE priorities. Each plan is organised around a learning objective with two to three related activities that often require the development of learning aids using local materials. For example, a math lesson for primary school children required their children and their parents to paint and number recycled bottles and use the painted bottles as bowling pins. After each match, children and parents add the numbers on each bowling pin to determine the final score of the game.



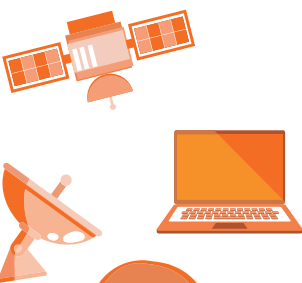
## Provisions of Fungible Materials

Although the lesson plans encouraged the use of recycled or locally available materials to develop each activity (such as recycled bottles, etc), World Vision also provided children and their families with fungibles—such as paint, paper, pencils and crayons—to ensure children and their parents could effectively carry out planned activities.



## Participation of Parents

Parental participation was a key objective and a driving force of these activities. According to WV's education specialist, "Parents don't usually participate very actively", so the team sought to increase parental participation both to ensure success and as a goal unto itself. Lessons encouraged the active participation of parents in game-based learning.



## Involvement of Teachers

Teachers played an important role. Although classes were put on hold for the first full year of the pandemic (and intermittently thereafter), many teachers in WV catchment areas maintained regular contact with their students. Teachers supported the development of lesson plans, worked together with WV staff to ensure that students received activities and fungible materials and conducted follow-up with families. Many of the materials WV has used during the process reflect the contributions of teachers, an essential strategy for building local ownership and buy-in.



## Use of Technology

Although internet is scarce at home for most rural households, cellphones in Bolivia are becoming ubiquitous, and many parents can access internet through their mobile service provider. For families with internet access, WV and local teachers shared materials and conducted follow-up using WhatsApp. The team also developed interactive instruction videos and radio messages to reinforce learning. WV distributed physical copies to households without reliable internet access to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable.

# PRELIMINARY RESULTS & OBSERVED EFFECTS



## CAPACITY OF KEY COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS STRENGTHENED

**3,433** TEACHERS  
+  
**40,610** PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



## EDUCATION ACCESS ENSURED FOR CHILDREN

**17,631** PRE-PRIMARY CHILDREN  
+  
**40,760** PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

### THE ACTIVITY PLAYED AN IMPORTANT BRIDGING ROLE.

While WVB has conducted no formal learning assessment to understand the initiative's impact on learning outcomes, WVB staff have observed that the activities **kept children engaged in learning** and are likely to have mitigated significant learning loss.



## INCREASED ACTIVE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Across WVB implementation areas parents and caregivers have expressed excitement and high interest in the approach, likely attributable to the focus on games and highly interactive activities.



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