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SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL PLUS

Dates of project: November 2021 – December 2024

Budget: \$ 2,890,000

Safe Return to School Plus, implemented by UNICEF in coordination with the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) and financed by USAID, seeks to support a safe return to schools after facing the impacts of tropical storms, Eta and Iota, and the consequences of COVID-19 in Guatemala's education sector.

Project activities are focused on improving access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and access to electric energy in schools. The project works alongside MINEDUC to identify challenges to the system under the new context and to implement solutions that contribute to improve learning.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC APPROACH

The project works in 275 elementary schools, selected in collaboration with MINEDUC, in the departments of Alta Verapaz, Huehuetenango and Quiché, which register the lowest indicators for human development in the country (IDH-M: 0.56) and with education being the dimension with the lowest ranking and greatest inequality¹. Additionally, the Project will support MINEDUC in different technical areas.

¹ Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano PNUD 2022

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Formal education is essential for social and economic development, and school facilities are key for formal education. Schools must provide basic services for hygiene. Also, electric energy allows schools to provide adequate conditions for learning, regardless of weather conditions or time of day, and enables schools to acquire access to digital technology.

Physically accessing the schools which are in isolated rural areas, and ensuring the sustainability of the interventions are the main challenges given that the activity is focused on the most vulnerable communities, with high levels of poverty and other development challenges.

APPROACH AND RESULTS

To guarantee proper access to schools and to promote sustainability, all the project's interventions involve the support and participation of the relevant local, regional, and national stakeholders: MINEDUC, school-level administrative units (principals, teachers and parents' organizations), community organizations, and municipal governments.

The expected results of the intervention include:

- Improved access to water, sanitation, and hygiene in selected schools. Includes installation of separate restrooms and/or latrines for boys and girls, installation of hand-washing stations, installation of water capture and storage systems, and improving the supply of hygiene products for students.
- Support MINEDUC in its adaptation to address key issues that may contribute to improve learning in the new context imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will work with MINEDUC to identify institutional challenges and to implement solutions that contribute to improve learning outcomes. The project will work together with the education community in planning and preparedness for natural disasters. Technical assistance will be provided to improve the demand and use of data to inform decision making at the national and local levels.
- Provide access to electricity through the installation of solar panels in selected schools. Technical assistance will be provided to MINEDUC to improve designs that contemplate use of clean energies and support to the supervision of improvement implementation.
- The intervention will benefit approximately 41,576 elementary students (20,682 girls and 20,944 boys) between the ages of 6 and 15.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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