



Brief note

Learning After the Earthquake: Recommendations for Education Recovery in Venezuela



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Almirante Grau 915, Barranco, Lima. <https://grade.org.pe/en/>

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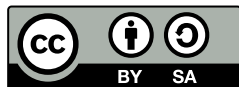
Pocuro 2058, Providencia, Santiago de Chile. <https://www.summaedu.org/>

Authors of the brief note: Aranza Ballesteros, Santiago Cueto and Ivonne Porras.

Contact information: For inquiries about the AdaptED Project or the findings featured in this brief note, please contact the project leader: Santiago Cueto (scueto@grade.org.pe). Project website: <https://adapted-lac.org/>.

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Editor's note: This publication uses inclusive terms such as "children", "adolescents" and others that refer to both men and women.

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This brief note aims to **provide evidence-informed recommendations to support the education sector response in Venezuela following the June 2026 earthquakes**. It identifies priority actions to restore safe and inclusive access to learning, protect the well-being of children, adolescents, teachers, and families, and strengthen coordination among government, civil society, and international partners. The note draws on international experience from education responses to disasters and adapts these lessons to the immediate and medium-term needs of the Venezuelan context.

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Emergency Context and Immediate Impacts on Education

On June 24, 2026, Venezuela was struck by two consecutive earthquakes measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude, with the epicenter in the state of Yaracuy, primarily impacting La Guaira, Caracas, and Distrito Capital (García, 2026). As of the official update on July 2, the disaster has resulted in 2,295 deaths and 12,841 injuries (Deutsche Welle, 2026), constituting a large-scale emergency. In this context, UNICEF (2026) estimates that around 1.8 million people, including 680,000 children and adolescents, require humanitarian assistance, while 15,800 people have been displaced from their homes. At the same time, the United Nations reports that search and rescue operations are ongoing, along with the expansion of aid in shelters and affected communities (Quiñones, 2026).

In this emergency context, the education system is facing serious challenges that threaten the continuity of learning and the well-being of students. In Distrito Capital, 432 schools (more than one third of the total) have been damaged, a figure that may increase as assessments continue in other regions (UNICEF, 2026). In addition, several functioning schools are being used as temporary shelters, which hinders the resumption of classes and affects the education continuity of thousands of students. In response, there is a need for measures that ensure safe and continuous access to education, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations and in coordination with health and protection sectors. The recommendations in this note, which are based on evidence from prior education responses to disasters, can be used to orient a response that addresses urgent needs while laying the groundwork for a safer, more inclusive, and more resilient recovery of the Venezuelan education system.

1. Education in Emergencies: Prioritizing and Protecting Vulnerable Learners

Children and adolescents are among the most vulnerable groups following a disaster. In the case of Venezuela, reports have indicated the presence of unaccompanied or separated children, which represents a significant protection risk in the aftermath of the earthquakes (Save the Children, 2026). Persons with disabilities and displaced populations may also face heightened barriers in accessing assistance, information, and education services (Quiñones, 2026). Ensuring learning continuity is therefore not only an education priority but also a critical protection measure for the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Drawing on international experiences from education responses to disasters, two recommendations are particularly relevant:

- **Strengthen the role of teachers and schools in identifying and supporting vulnerable learners.** Experience following the 2017 Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico shows that teachers can play a key role in identifying and monitoring affected students through maintaining contact with families, conducting community visits, and coordinating referrals to education, psychosocial, and protection services. In the Venezuelan context, teachers and school leaders should be supported to help identify unaccompanied or separated children, displaced learners, students requiring psychosocial support, and those at risk of dropping out. However, this role must be accompanied by adequate support for teachers themselves, including psychosocial assistance, practical guidance, peer support, and the resources needed to respond without compromising their own well-being or teaching capacity (Vargas-Díaz and Zambrana-Ortiz, 2019). Continuous and peer-led training should be prioritized, as evidence suggests it is more effective than one-off training interventions (Marei, et al, 2026).
- **Link education continuity with social protection and targeted support for vulnerable learners.** Experience from the 2015 Nepal earthquake shows that, beyond resuming classes, it is essential to implement social protection measures and community-based support targeting especially children from displaced households, low-income families, and households affected by injury or loss of livelihoods. In the short and medium term, in the case of Venezuela, this may entail combining psychosocial support in schools, flexible learning modalities, and strengthening social protection programs—such as cash transfers, school feeding, and back-to-school campaigns—in order to reduce economic and territorial barriers affecting school retention and ensure education continuity (Chongbang, 2022). Any such measures should also address the needs of children with disabilities through targeted support to ensure equitable access to education. However, evidence on effective interventions for this population in post-disaster settings remains limited.

2. Continuity of Education: Using Multimodal and Alternative Learning Approaches

Initially, the Ministry of Popular Power for Education extended the suspension of school activities nationwide until July 5, 2026. As of July 6, however, classes resumed in 18 of Venezuela's 24 states, with schools remaining closed in the areas most affected by the disaster. In the states of La Guaira, Caracas, Aragua, Carabobo, Miranda, and Falcón, classes continue to be suspended until further notice, either across entire states or in selected municipalities, depending on the extent of the damage (MPPE, 2026). In the hardest-hit areas, the return to in-person learning may be further delayed by damage to education infrastructure and the use of some schools as temporary shelters. While digital education can help maintain access to learning, it cannot on its own ensure the continuity of learning in a context where disasters may disrupt electricity, telecommunications, internet connectivity, and access to devices. Digital strategies should therefore be complemented by flexible, low-tech, and community-based modalities that can reach the most affected and underserved students (Ballesteros et al., 2026).

Drawing on international experience, two recommendations are particularly relevant:

- **Establish alternative learning spaces where schools cannot operate safely.** When school buildings are damaged, inaccessible, or being used as shelters, temporary and community-based learning spaces can help restore routines, provide structured learning opportunities, and support the reintegration of the most affected students. The experience of Colombia, through the Escuela

Nueva Learning Circles, shows that small-group, community-based models—combining tutoring, personalized support, and flexible pedagogies—can help bring displaced and out-of-school children back into learning (UNICEF, 2019). In Venezuela, similar approaches could be adapted in suitable local spaces, provided that minimum standards for safety, WASH, and child protection are met.

- **Adopt a multimodal approach to sustain learning processes.** In contexts where connectivity and infrastructure are weak or uneven, digital platforms should be complemented by low-tech and no-tech options. International experience, including from Yemen, shows that weak connectivity and limited infrastructure can restrict the reach and effectiveness of digital education, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, when systems may not yet be fully operational (Al Mansour et al., 2026). A multimodal approach is therefore essential to reduce inequalities in access and sustain learning for the most affected students. In practice, this may include combining online resources with education radio and television, printed learning materials, teacher follow-up, community learning groups, and family guidance, especially when there are disruptions in electricity supply or connectivity. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, radio proved to be an essential channel for maintaining communication with affected communities (Nelson et al., 2011). In Venezuela, Radio Educa could similarly be leveraged as part of a multimodal strategy to ensure learning continuity during the emergency and throughout the recovery phase (MPPE, n.d.)

3. Well-being and Protection: Beyond the Return to School

Earthquakes not only disrupt learning but also affect the emotional well-being of students, teachers, and families. Fear, uncertainty, material losses, and even the loss of loved ones can affect children's ability to return to school, participate in learning, and recover from the crisis. For this reason, the education response must combine the restoration of school continuity with psychosocial support to help the education community cope with the crisis and regain a sense of safety. In this regard, the following recommendation is particularly relevant:

- **Strengthen psychosocial support for students, teachers, and families.** Experience from Cuba following Hurricane Oscar in 2024 highlights the importance of deploying specialized mental health teams, identifying students and families in vulnerable situations, and promoting recreational, artistic, and community-based activities that support emotional recovery (UNICEF, 2025). Similarly, after the earthquakes in Mexico in 2017, UNICEF implemented Child-Friendly Spaces where children and adolescents could play, draw, and engage in recreational activities with the support of trained psychosocial staff (United Nations, 2018). In addition, the National Center for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED) and the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) promoted the training of mental health professionals and volunteers in psychological first aid and crisis intervention. Together, these experiences underscore the importance of combining specialized care, safe spaces for emotional recovery, and the strengthening of local capacities to respond to the socio-emotional needs of the education community (CENAPRED, 2018).

4. Coordination and Cooperation: Strengthening Partnerships for an Effective Education Response

The scale and complexity of disasters often exceed the response capacity of any single institution. Education recovery therefore requires effective coordination among government authorities, civil society,

local communities, and international organizations. International experience shows that coordinated responses can facilitate resource mobilization, reduce duplication, promote knowledge exchange, and ensure that interventions are aligned with contextual needs (Ballesteros et al., 2026). In Venezuela, several international organizations already have a presence and experience working in the country, providing an important opportunity to strengthen the education response. In this regard, the following is recommended:

- **Strengthen coordination with specialized national and international organizations.** Organizations such as UNICEF, UNHCR, UNESCO, Save the Children, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Plan International, INEE, GADRRRES, and UNDRR have experience and established frameworks to support education responses in emergency contexts, and several of them are already active in Venezuela. Strengthened coordination with these actors could help mobilize technical assistance and resources, support joint needs assessments, facilitate referrals between education, protection, health, and social services, and promote the adaptation of international good practices to the Venezuelan context. It would also enable greater exchange with countries in the region that have faced similar emergencies, helping to ensure that the education response is timely, coherent, and responsive to the needs of children, adolescents, teachers, and affected communities.

Final reflection:

The recovery of Venezuela's education system will require more than the reopening of schools. It will depend on a coordinated response that protects the most vulnerable learners, restores safe and inclusive access to education, supports the well-being of students and teachers, and sustains learning through flexible and multimodal approaches. International experience shows that education can play a central role in helping children, adolescents, families, and communities regain stability after a disaster. By placing learners' needs, protection, and resilience at the center of the response, schools can become safe spaces for care, recovery, and renewed opportunity. In this sense, education is not only a pathway back to normalcy, but a foundation for rebuilding stronger and more resilient communities.

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