System Capacity Grant Annual Progress Report Template

Status: Accepted

Country	Grant ID	Grant Agent	Grant Effectiveness/Start Date
Nicaragua	GPE0016483	SCG	08/01/2024

Grant Amount	Timeframe Examined in this Report		Date of Report Submission
	From Date	To Date	
1,300,000 (USD)	10/31/2024	10/28/2025	11/01/2025

Area(s) and activity group(s) covered by grant

Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact

- System diagnostics, compact development and education sector analyses

Implementation Progress

Overall Project Progress this Reporting Period

Overall progress this reporting period 1

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)

Previous Rating

NA

Detailed Description including factors that lead to an upgrade/downgrade in the rating

The project implementation was interrupted by the lack of communications by the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua since April 2025. Since the beginning of the project, and despite virtual and onsite meetings held, there were no advancements on activities as their inception and design depended also on the review of the Ministry of Education. In October 2024, implementation strategies for component 1 activities were discussed jointly (Ministry of Education and UNESCO), though the Ministry of Education did not advance in commitments made such as the drafting of TORs which implied the definition of the contracting modality (third provider (universities, NGOs, etc) or expert individuals).

In component 2, there were more advancements as the LLECE UNESCO started to produce documents to support Nicaragua participation in ERCE 2025, which were provided even before this project started and were common to other countries. The LLECE builds capacities and provide technical documents to all its member states implementing the ERCE assessments, which included guidelines, criteria or inputs are provided on a common/agreed basis in the beginning of the preparation of the study (years 2022 and 2023). In fact, UNESCO San Jose financially supported with UNESCO regular programme funds Nicaragua participation in ERCE related meetings (air tickets, lodging, terminal fares) as well as the pilot implementation of the ERCE in early 2024 (USD 28,000). In this regard, the advancements of activities in component 2 are related to this previous participation and engagement of Nicaragua with the ERCE study, similarly to the rest of Member States participating in the LLECE.

Describe priority actions planned for the following year to overcome constraints, build on achievements and partnerships, and use the lessons learned during the reporting period.

UNESCO remains at the disposal of the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua and GPE to identify the best strategy for continuing project execution, including the subcontracting of an implementation institution to which available funds can be transferred.

Grant Implementation Progress, by Grant Window

Grant Window	Level of Progress this Reporting Period [2]	Previous Rating
Window 1: Strengthen gender-responsive planning and policy development for system-wide impact	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	NA

Detailed Description:

During 2024 and the beginning of 2025 (February), the UNESCO San Jose Office worked with the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua to advance the implementation of the grant concerning two main activities included in the grant. The first of them framed under component 1, was to review the effectiveness of early childhood education curriculum, make recommendations for improvement, and on that basis, design a new teacher training system for early childhood teachers; while the second one was to support the participation of Nicaragua in the 2025 ERCE Study, implemented by the UNESCO Laboratory for Quality Education Assessment, concerning the application of assessments directed to third and sixth grade primary education students on math, language, sciences and socioemotional skills. The ERCE study includes surveys to teachers, principals and families to allow for the analysis of associated factors impacting students´ learning achievements on those areas. In the amidst of both activities, UNESCO continued to lead until April 2025 the Local Education Group, creating opportunities to present advances on GPE grants (existing and new ones), revisions needed and governmental education priorities. Unfortunately, no end of the year 2024 LEG meeting was held despite communications with the Ministry of Education Planning Director and other stakeholders.

Concerning component 1, UNESCO met in October 2024 with the Ministry of Education authorities, including the minister of education, the director of planning, the coordinator of education projects, the cooperation director, and the education adviser to the President, in order to draft a plan of action for accelerated implementation given the needs of the country vis a vis the proposed project activities.

Discussions involved technical approaches for activities prioritization as well as the contract modalities of professionals and institutions to undertake the tasks. The Ministry of Education agreed to send to UNESCO by November 2024 the draft terms of reference for contracting the providers of the activities to be undertaken. They were also to consult based on the discussions held on the contract modalities (individuals or third party providers (NGOs, universities), having UNESCO explained their advantages and disadvantages and a recommendation to combine both modalities in the component 1. UNESCO also provided recommendations on potencial partners to the Ministry of Education, who also had another list of potencial institutions for implementation. UNESCO mentioned in the conversations that contracts over certain amounts of money need processes such as signing an implementing partner´ agreement (IPA) as well as submitting the process to the UNESCO contracts´ committee. In this regard, while the Ministry of Education was defining the terms of reference according to preferred modalities, UNESCO started to go through all internal processes to be ready to proceed accordingly to address any of the different options that could be decided by the Ministry of Education.

It is important to highlight that UNESCO never received the draft terms of reference, despite requesting them by different sources of communication. A call was organized in March 2025 with ministry of education counterparts (project coordinator, planning director and director of cooperation) to check on the status of the terms of reference, but the documents were never received. UNESCO offered several times to advance a first version to facilitate the Ministry of Education tasks. The Ministry of Education was also rethinking the contractual modalities. In March 2025 no progress was registered from conversations in late 2024.

On component 2, Nicaragua was able to pay its membership to the UNESCO LLECE from 2022 to half of 2025, though it was originally expected that installments were to be extended to 2027. The installments provided by member countries to LLECE serve to build their capacities to design and implement the 2025 ERCE nationally, prepare outputs (mainly documents and software for application) as well as analyze and disseminate the study outcomes (assessment results). From 2022, Nicaragua, such as the other Latino America LLECE member countries, participated in meetings pilot exercises, document building and review, training workshops, among other activities. In this regard, during 2024 and 2025, the country was benefited from the following technical assistance, tools and capacity opportunities:

-A total of 42 products were delivered to the country, including the following categories:
-Curricular Analysis (Inputs for specifications tables, assessments and questionnaires; Regional and country report by 2025 ERCE disciplines; and Regional and country report on transformative education areas to be included in 2025 ERCE)
-Pilot test process (early 2024): Application manuals; digital system for sample management; Reading test, 3rd grade; Mathematics test, 3rd grade; Writing test, 3rd grade; Questionnaire on socio-emotional

skills; 3rd grade; Questionnaire for 3rd grade students; Questionnaire for 3rd grade teachers; Reading test for 6th grade; Mathematics test for 6th grade; Writing test, 6th grade; Science test 6th grade; Questionnaire on social-emotional skills, 6th grade; Questionnaire for students, 6th grade; Questionnaire for teachers 6th grade; Questionnaire for families; Questionnaire for principals; Definition of sample; digital system for entering results; Report on pilot results;
-Definitive test process: digital system for final application; application manuals; final sample; Reading test, 3rd grade; Mathematics test, 3rd grade; Writing test, 3rd grade; Questionnaire on socio-emotional skills; 3rd grade; Questionnaire for 3rd grade students; Questionnaire for 3rd grade teachers; Reading test for 6th grade; Mathematics test for 6th grade; Writing test, 6th grade; Science test 6th grade; Questionnaire on social-emotional skills, 6th grade; Questionnaire for students, 6th grade; Questionnaire for teachers 6th grade; Questionnaire for families; Questionnaire for principals; Definition of sample; digital system for entering results;

Concerning the capacities built in the country forERCE implementation teams, it is important to highlight the onsite attendance of planning director of the Ministry of Education to technical preparation 2025 ERCE meetings can be accounted for from 2023 with funding from UNESCO Santiago that hosts the LLECE:

• Sampling Techniques Workshop. Virtual, 12 and 13 December 2022.
• Item Development Workshop. Santiago, Chile. 11–13 April 2023
• Pilot Data Collection and Capture Workshop. Antigua, Guatemala. 25–27 July 2023
• Open-Ended Question Correction Workshop. Panama City, Panama. 4–6 December 2023

Other spaces for capacity building and decision making for 2025 ERCE implementation are the regional meetings of national coordinators, where focal points participate. In the case of Nicaragua the director of education planning. Funds for the participation of Nicaragua were provided by UNESCO Santiago and UNESCO San Jose Offices.

• LVI Reunión de Coordinadores Nacionales. Quito, Ecuador. 24-26 de enero 2023
• LVII Reunión de Coordinadores Nacionales. Buenos Aires, Argentina. 4-6 de julio 2023
• LVIII Reunión de Coordinadores Nacionales. Punta Cana, República Dominicana. 23-25 de abril 2024
• LIX Reunión de Coordinadores Nacionales. Santiago, Chile. 11 de diciembre 2024 held in December 2024 and the participation in various online meetings.

Additionally, Nicaragua received manuals for the application of the piloting and the definitive tests:

•Manual for National Coordination of ERCE 2025. (Delivered to Nicaragua)
•Manual for Application of 2025 ERCE. (Delivered to Nicaragua)
•Manual for Administration of ERCE 2025 Sample. (Delivered to Nicaragua)
•Manual for Data Capture for ERCE 2025. (Delivery in the second half of 2025)
•Manual for the Correction of Open-Ended Questions and the Writing Test of the ERCE 2025. (Delivery in the second half of 2025)

The country had also access to specific software that can be adapted and used for other national education assessments. The LLECE develops software that supports the study's operation, with the aim of standardizing the process and providing a reliable tool. In this regard, the country had access to the software WinW3S - Windows Within-School Sampling- utilized to administer the sample of population to be assessed during the ERCE Study 2025.

Lessons, innovative/promising practices

During the reporting period, and in particular during 2024, Nicaragua engagement and preparation for the implementation of the ERCE 2025 piloting. The inputs emanated from this pilot were processed during early 2025 and a document generated to informe the country and improve planning and implementation of the definitive ERCE assessment (expected second half of 2025). Funds from this grant were utilized to support the processing of the data obtained, as it was part of the benefits of the country obtained as a result of the membership of the UNESCO LLECE and the payment of the installments.

Link: https://www.unesco.org/es/articles/piloto-de-la-evaluacion-diagnostica-erce-escuelas-de-la-unesco-avanza-con-jornada-de-trabajo-sobre

Impact stories

Building on the above, no impact stories identified. Though news articles were generated from the participation of Nicaragua in LLECE preparation events for ERCE implementation in 2024. It is important to highlight that this grant supported the country in payment past and future (2022-2027) installments for UNESCO LLECE Membership.

-https://x.com/minednicaragua/status/1867660015915642912
-https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/159409-encuentro-por-los-30-anos-del-laboratorio-latinoamericano-de-evaluacion-de-la-calidad-de-la-educacion-de-unesco

Given the situation of the project, it is recommended before posting newsarticles, to request authorization by the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua.

Tangible Outputs, Knowledge Products, Results Framework and other Supporting Documentation

#	File Name	Document Type	Description

The documents listed were submitted with the progress report. If you'd like access to them, please contact the grant operations officer for your country.

Financial Reporting & Grant Management

Financial Reporting on GPE Grant

Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate

Approved Budget to Date	Cumulative Expenditure	Cumulative Financial Absorption Rate	Level of Financial Absorption
1,300,000	228,042.15	17.54	Off Track

Since the financial absorption is not rated as 'on track', please provide an explanation that identifies the main activities that have been delayed and their corresponding unspent amounts, as well as reasons for the delay and steps taken to ensure that expenditure absorption gets on track in the next reporting period.

The grant agency has not received any communication from the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua since early 2025. The only outputs advanced were the ones belonging to Component 2, as the funding was used, according to the project document agreed upon with the Member State and the LGE, to cover past and current installments (2022-half 2025) owed by Nicaragua to UNESCO LLECE for its membership, considering that throughout this years, despite the lack of payment by Nicaragua Ministry of Education, the country continue benefiting and participating from LLECE activities leading to the ERCE implementation. In fact, the government included this in the project proposal aware of the importance of its continued participation in the LLECE as a pillar of the implementation of the 2025 ERCE Study which was expected to take place in the second half of 2025.

Budget Variance Analysis for the Current Reporting Period

Total Approved Budget for the Current Reporting Period
900,997

Total Expenditure for the Current Reporting Period
228,042.15

Explanation for underspending or overspending in excess of 10%

Management Performance

Level of management performance
Satisfactory (S)

Detailed Description
The management performed by UNESCO (both in San Jose Office and Headquarters) did at all levels the most to achieve the continuity of project activities, with close follow-up to government focal points and GPE counterparts to address implementation challenges resulting from the interruption of communications with the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua with grant agency, as a result of the declaration of the national government to retire from UNESCO in April 2025.

Previous to that, in an scenario of scarce communications held with the Ministry of Education counterparts since the end of 2024, UNESCO tried to get their responses to formal emails sent with bilateral informal communications using whatsapp or phone calls. As a result of this continous attempt, UNESCO got to organize a virtual meeting with the Ministry of Education in March 2025 to talk about pending decisions from the Ministry of Education which were causing implementation delays for component 1; UNESCO also raised the importance of organizing a LEG meeting as required by GPE. UNESCO drafted a communication to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as indicated by the Ministry of Education, to propose an agenda for that meeting, involving also the organization of project meetings with the Ministry of Education (March 2025). Nevertheless, no response was received by the Ministry of Education in the review of the draft note or meeting alternativas proposed. The last meeting where the UNESCO -MINED Project was discussed at the LEG was in June 2024, opportunity in which it was approved ("Endoso"). From that moment, this project was not discussed within the LEG. Nevertheless, the LEG approved by virtual exchanges by email the extension of UNICEF-MINED projects.

Revisions to the grant

This period, have there been any revisions to the grant other than those submitted to the Secretariat for their approval?
No

How likely is that the grant agent will submit a request for revision to the Secretariat in the next 12 months for their approval?
Likely

Detailed Description
Since the retirement of Nicaragua from UNESCO in April 2025, GPE hold separately conversations with UNESCO and the Ministry of Education of Nicaragua to identify the best ways for continuation of the project activities. Two options arise in the short term as a result of the conversations:

One of them, it is the idenfication of a partner institution by the government of Nicaragua to continue implementing the project activities. UNESCO remains from the very beginning at the disposal of all stakeholders to do all the necessary in terms of funds transfer to other organization /institution. In case this situation occurs, UNESCO expressed to GPE the importance of keeping the comunications with the

partner institution, so that propper financial and progress reports are ensured with the quality and transparency expected. As UNESCO continues/will continue to be the grant agency, the responsibility of financial and technical reporting will remain in its hands. This alternative of action will allow for the Nicaragua government to continue the implementation of the grant, avoiding any possibility of losing funds. UNESCO may also advise and collaborate with the selected partner institution for ensuring high quality implementation. Nevertheless, the second component of the project related to the ERCE implementation would need to be reviewed as the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education is no longer a member of the LLECE. As suggested in conversations with GPE, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education could take advantage of the capacity built in previous years jointly with other countries under the framework of the LLECE preparation activities towards ERCE, to undertake national evaluations.

Another scenario could be the closing of the programme and the return of the funds by UNESCO. This decision will result as mentioned above as a consensus between involved stakeholders. It is understood that this may imply an impact for the for Nicaragua government in terms of the access to the available funds, including the implementation of a process for renewing the baseline document ("Compacto"). UNESCO remains at the disposal of all stakeholders to contribute with its experience in the elaboration of a new document, if necessary and requested.

Annexes

Annex 1: List of Acronyms

Acronym	Description

1 Highly Unsatisfactory- The grant has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory - The grant has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory - The grant has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings or delays. Satisfactory – The grant is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory - The grant is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

2 Highly Unsatisfactory – The window has major shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is unlikely. Unsatisfactory – The window has significant shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs and a resolution is uncertain. Moderately Unsatisfactory – The window has moderate shortcomings or delays that limit or jeopardize the achievement of one or more outputs but a resolution is likely. Moderately Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve most of its major outputs efficiently with moderate shortcomings. Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve almost all of its major outputs efficiently with only minor shortcomings or delays. Highly Satisfactory – The window is expected to achieve or exceed all of the major outputs efficiently without significant shortcomings or delays.

3 tooltip