Cover Note for
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding Request

OVERVIEW	
Country:	Nicaragua
Grant agent(s):	World Bank
Coordinating agency(ies):	UNFPA
Program name:	Nicaragua COVID-19 Education Sector Response (Respuesta del Sector Educativo ante el COVID-19)
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding amount requested:	USD 7,000,000
Agency fees amount (additional to COVID-19 Accelerated Funding amount requested):[1]	USD 122,500
Agency fees as % of total COVID-19 Accelerated Funding requested:	1.75%
COVID-19 Accelerated Funding application date:	9/28/2020
Estimated COVID-19 Accelerated Funding program start date:	11/17/2020
Estimated COVID-19 Accelerated Funding program closing date (must be last day of the month, e.g. June **30**, 2021):	4/22/2022
Expected submission date of completion report (At the latest 6 months after program closing date):	10/15/2022

Grant modality - (please enter '**X**')		
		Sector Pooled
		Project Pooled/ Co-financed
	X	Project/ Stand-alone

[1] General agency fees are additional to the Accelerated Funding amount requested, and determined by the grant agent's own internal regulations. They are paid to the agency's headquarters and relate to overhead costs and are typically used to assist in the defrayment of administrative and other costs incurred in connection with the management and administration of grant funds. These fees are pre-determined in the Financial Procedure Agreement (FPA) between the grant agent and the GPE Trustee.

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Report No: PAD4106

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

PROJECT APPRAISAL DOCUMENT
ON A
PROPOSED GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION (GPE) GRANT

IN THE AMOUNT OF US$ 6.65 MILLION

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF NICARAGUA

FOR

NICARAGUA COVID-19 EDUCATION SECTOR RESPONSE PROJECT

September 28, 2020

Education Global Practice
Latin America And Caribbean Region

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective June 1, 2020)

Currency Unit =	Nicaraguan Córdobas Oro (NIO)
NIO$33.74 =	US$1

FISCAL YEAR
January 1 - December 31

Regional Vice President:	Carlos Felipe Jaramillo
Country Director:	Andrea C. Guedes
Regional Director:	Luis Benveniste
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Task Team Leader(s):	Enrique O. Alasino Massetti, Alonso Sanchez

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACE	Alliance for the Quality of Education
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
COVID-19	Sickness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
DF	Finance Division (*División Financiera*)
DGAF	Administrative and Financial General Division (*División General Administrativa Financiera*)
DGCPP	General Division for Program and Project Coordination (*División General de Coordinación de Programas y Proyectos*)
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESPIG	Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant
E&S	Environmental and Social
FM	Financial Management
GDP	Gross domestic product
GoN	Government of Nicaragua
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GRS	Grievance Redress Service
ICT	Information and communication technology
IP/AD	Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants
IPF	Investment Project Financing
MINED	Ministry of Education
MINSA	Ministry of Health
PDO	Project development objective
PST	Project Support Team Unit
PPSD	Project Procurement Strategy for Development
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SIAF	Financial Administrative Information System (*Sistema de Información Administrativo Financiero)*
SIGAF	Integrated Financial Administrative Management System (*Sistema Integrado de Gestión Administrativa Financiera)*
STEP	Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement
TERCE	Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Populations Activities
WB	World Bank
WBG	World Bank Group

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DATASHEET

BASIC INFORMATION

Country(ies)	Project Name		
Nicaragua	Nicaragua COVID-19 Education Sector Response		
Project ID	Financing Instrument	Environmental and Social Risk Classification	Process
P174677	Investment Project Financing	Moderate	Urgent Need or Capacity Constraints (FCC)

Financing & Implementation Modalities

[ ] Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA)	[ ] Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC)
[ ] Series of Projects (SOP)	[ ] Fragile State(s)
[ ] Performance-Based Conditions (PBCs)	[ ] Small State(s)
[ ] Financial Intermediaries (FI)	[ ] Fragile within a non-fragile Country
[ ] Project-Based Guarantee	[ ] Conflict
[ ] Deferred Drawdown	[✓] Responding to Natural or Man-made Disaster
[ ] Alternate Procurement Arrangements (APA)	[ ] Hands-on Enhanced Implementation Support (HEIS)

Expected Approval Date	Expected Closing Date
13-Nov-2020	22-Apr-2022

Bank/IFC Collaboration

No

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objectives (PDOs) are to support MINED's COVID-19 response programs conducive to reducing learning gaps; and develop socioemotional skills for vulnerable groups.

Official Use

Components

Component Name	Cost (US$, millions)
Supporting programs to reduce learning gaps for vulnerable groups in preschool, primary and secondary education	4.95
Support programs to develop socioemotional skills in vulnerable schools	1.45
Project Management	0.25

Organizations

Borrower:	Republic of Nicaragua
Implementing Agency:	Ministry of Education (MINED)

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	6.65
Total Financing	6.65
of which IBRD/IDA	0.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	6.65
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	6.65

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

Practice Area (Lead)	Contributing Practice Areas
Education	

SYSTEMATIC OPERATIONS RISK-RATING TOOL (SORT)

Risk Category	Rating
1. Political and Governance	Substantial
2. Macroeconomic	Substantial
3. Sector Strategies and Policies	Moderate
4. Technical Design of Project or Program	Moderate
5. Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Sustainability	Substantial
6. Fiduciary	Moderate
7. Environment and Social	Moderate
8. Stakeholders	Moderate
9. Other	Substantial
10. Overall	Substantial

COMPLIANCE

Policy

Does the project depart from the CPF in content or in other significant respects?

[✓] Yes [ ] No

Does the project require any waivers of Bank policies?

[ ] Yes [✓] No

Environmental and Social Standards Relevance Given its Context at the Time of Appraisal

E & S Standards	Relevance
Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	Relevant
Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure	Relevant
Labor and Working Conditions	Relevant
Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management	Relevant
Community Health and Safety	Relevant
Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement	Not Currently Relevant
Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources	Not Currently Relevant
Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities	Relevant
Cultural Heritage	Not Currently Relevant
Financial Intermediaries	Not Currently Relevant

NOTE: For further information regarding the World Bank's due diligence assessment of the Project's potential environmental and social risks and impacts, please refer to the Project's Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary (ESRS).

Legal Covenants

Conditions

I. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A. Country Context

1. **Despite recent progress in poverty reduction, inequalities remain a key development challenge for Nicaragua.** With an estimated Gross Domestic Product growth of 4.7 percent in 2016, the country was able to favor pro-poor social spending that contributed to a reduction in general poverty (from 42.5 percent in 2009 to 29.6 percent in 2014) and extreme poverty (from 14.6 percent in 2009 to 8.3 percent in 2014). Even with progress made, about 1.7 million Nicaraguans (approximately one-third of the population) still lived below the overall official poverty line in 2014, with the majority (approximately 71 percent) concentrated in rural areas and remote communities with constrained access to basic services. The country also faces significant inequalities generated by the political crisis caused in April 2018, especially in terms of employment opportunities. However, health and education services are free, gradually improving the quality of care for the population. Moreover, the April 2018 crisis has led to the economy contracting from -4.0 and -3.9 percent in 2018 and 2019, respectively. To respond to these challenges and mitigate their impact on the poorest, the Government of Nicaragua (GoN) has committed to important reforms to raise productivity and boost shared prosperity, including strategies for reducing poverty and improving education, employment and innovation at their core.

2. **Although there are few confirmed cases in the country, the COVID-19 pandemic will likely exacerbate Nicaragua's current economic crisis.** The first Coronavirus (COVID-19) case was confirmed on March 18, 2020. Since September 2, 2020, there have been 4,494 officially confirmed cases and 137 deaths. In February 2020, the Ministry of Health (MINSA) has projected that the virus will continue to spread quickly within the next six months, reaching up to 32,500 cases and 813 deaths. The government has not closed schools, but has implemented protocols for preventive measures against the pandemic. The private sector has taken some protective measures, including flexible working arrangements, cancellation of events, and store and services. Consequently, the pandemic has led to job losses, a fall in consumer and business confidence, and a decline in labor intensive sectors, such as construction, commerce and restaurants, further halting progress achieved in poverty reduction since 2005. According to official latest forecasts, growth is expected to fall to - 4.5 percent in 2020 and recover to 0.5 percent by 2021, with an average growth of 2.5 percent in the medium-term to reach 3.0 percent in 2024 (Central Bank, 2020).

3. **The pandemic is expected to disproportionately impact the most vulnerable populations and slow down progress toward human capital development.** The country faces significant inequalities in terms of income, employment opportunities, and access to quality basic social services that is exacerbated during this crisis causing vulnerable populations huge suffering and challenging the most basic foundations of societal well-being. Approximately a quarter of the population still lived below the national poverty line in 2016, with the majority concentrated in rural areas and remote communities with constrained access to basic services. The unemployment rate was 6.8 percent in 2019 and both the informal economy and unemployment are high among youth (13 percent for the urban population between 15 to 24 years old). To respond to these challenges and mitigate their impact on the poorest, the Government of Nicaragua (GoN) has made important commitments to raise productivity and boost growth, including strategies for reducing poverty and improving shared prosperity with education, employment and innovation at their core. However, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the GoN will ensure that public social spending, consistent with the guidelines of the National Human Development Program, is protected and a priority for the year 2021.

4. **The pandemic may increase Nicaragua's socioeconomic vulnerabilities subject to the country's geography.** Nicaragua is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, including hurricanes and storm surges in coastal areas, as well as

extreme precipitation and earthquakes. The country's ability developed so far is still limited to withstand these climate and disaster risks which can lead to a variety of other unintended consequences. Extreme flooding, for example, can trigger mudslides and landslides, especially near the volcanic regions, putting many already vulnerable communities and physical structures at risk, including schools and other educational facilities, negatively impacting access to education for these vulnerable populations. Considering the health crisis, managing such disasters can prove even more challenging and life-threatening.

B. Sectoral and Institutional Context

5. As **other countries in the world, Nicaragua faces a learning crisis that undermines human capital formation and productivity, particularly for the poor, Indigenous people and afro-descendants (IP/AD), girls and young women**, **according to the World Bank's Human Capital Project.** This is observed in the results of the students in the standardized tests, which were low compared to other Central American countries. Student outcomes on standardized tests also continue to fall short compared to other countries in Central America. Nicaraguan students performed below their regional peers across all subject areas in the 2013 Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (*Tercer Estudio Regional Comparativo y Explicativo*, TERCE). Learning achievements also show significant statistical differences by gender even after controlling for socioeconomic status: typically, boys score better in mathematics (.09 SD higher in 6th grade) and science (.07 SD higher in 6th grade), while girls outperform boys in literature (.11 SD higher in 6th grade).

6. **The overall low performance is multifactorial and has been linked, among other factors, to the quality of the learning environment, as well as teachers' knowledge and skills.** A diagnostic study carried out among Nicaragua's eight public teacher training institutes highlighted potential areas for improvement, such as: (a) teacher's mastery of content of core subjects; (b) length of teaching and student mentoring in the classroom; and (c) teaching of pedagogical and evaluation strategies. In addition, there are limitations in school infrastructure that affect the availability of safe and adequate physical learning conditions, especially in rural areas. Nevertheless, since 2017, the Ministry of Education (MINED) has provided comprehensive teacher training and professional development programs at the preschool, primary and secondary levels under the Alliance for Educational Quality Project (ACE - P161029) with the aim of improving pedagogical practices of teachers and educators nationwide. The teacher professional development program, which has trained more than 500 school directors and deputy-directors and given pedagogic support to more than 2,500 teachers, has seen measured improvements in pedagogical practices. Learning environments have also improved with the implementation of new designs and the rehabilitation of schools in rural areas during the last decade. Still, some schools in Nicaragua have constraints in the availability of water and sanitation facilities similar to other countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, being a government's priority aspect to respond to in the current COVID-19 pandemic. While there have been notable improvements in teacher professional development opportunities and learning environments, the Ministry needs to expand and sustain these efforts to see lasting change in student learning.

7. **The COVID-19 pandemic threatens the country´s education progress, in great part due to the irregular school attendance that affects learning outcomes, especially of students from the most vulnerable households.** Although public schools in Nicaragua remain open, attendance varies by grade and geographical area, as some parents have decided not to send their children to school. MINED's administrative data show that school attendance of public schools' students went from 70.1% in the month of March to 45.3% in the month of June, the lowest in the period of the pandemic. At this moment, attendance is recovering and has reached 70.6% in September 2020. Private schools in the country have requested MINED's authorization to transition into distance education, impacting 220,148

students from pre-primary through end of secondary (approximately 12.2% of total enrollment). The COVID-19 pandemic impacts households and communities differently depending on their socioeconomic level and resilience. Middle and high-income families with children attending to private schools could better cope with the challenges posed by the crisis and sustain their children's learning at home while on an online or remote learning modality. This situation will widen the learning gap, leaving vulnerable children and youth without access to electronic devices and connectivity; however, the GoN is developing a series of educational actions and strategies to prevent anyone from being left behind in their learning, to ensure school permanence.

8. **MINED is doing important efforts to cope with the crisis, but a greater investment and coordinated efforts are needed to mitigate the impact on learning outcomes of the most vulnerable groups.** To ensure education continuity in the short-term, MINED has foreseen different scenarios and actions to strengthen and reinforce teaching and learning throughout public schools, including developing intensive training for primary and secondary teachers using webinars, videoconferences, massive open online courses, and a repository of digital resources hosted in MINED's portal. Additionally, MINED has promoted remote learning through educational television "Teleclasses" and the use of communication platforms, such as WhatsApp and Messenger, among others. In this context, this project would support MINED to: implement a comprehensive plan to package its prioritized curriculum and effectively deploy it in a set of comprehensive learning materials targeted to the vulnerable student populations without access to technological devices, including the training of teachers on how best to use them to reduce learning gaps.

9. **MINED is making use of "digital classrooms" to ensure access to digital technologies for students attending to secondary public schools; but rural primary schools lack the means to ensure learning continuity and recovery.** MINED has a total of 742 secondary education centers equipped with digital classrooms. However, primary schools located in rural areas, where the most vulnerable students attend, do not have access to adequate equipment and connectivity to ensure learning continuity. In this context, this project would help MINED to design and implement a comprehensive strategy to ensure that multi-grade primary schools in rural areas have access and make use of digital tools and technological platforms with proven capacity to ensure learning in a personalized and accelerated manner.

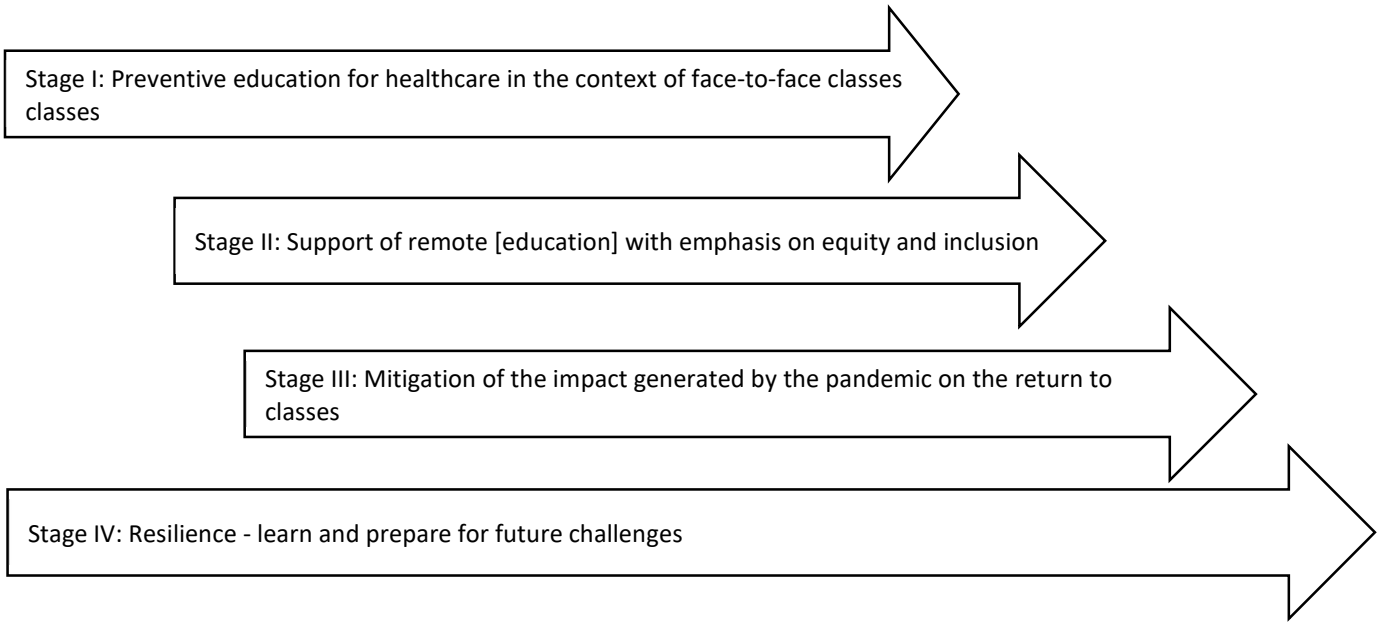
10. **The crisis is also affecting children and adolescents' emotional health and well-being, especially of those from the most vulnerable households.** The loss of relatives and friends, the economic pressures on many households, and the stress caused by sanitary measures like physical distancing, is likely to increase anxiety and depression. According to international evidence, girls and young women often bear a double or triple burden as they take care of the elderly and other children and are primarily responsible for housework, suffer greater domestic and sexual violence as crises increase tensions in households triggering aggression and structural violence against them (UN, 2020). International research from natural disasters and crises has consistently shown that as a result of these shocks, children and youth regularly experience psychological stress, which often translates into learning losses, threatening their future development. Further, parents and teachers may have difficulty adequately responding to threats to students' emotional well-being during the pandemic, given their lack of necessary training, and the fact that they are experiencing elevated levels of stress and anxiety themselves. Students, girls and young women from poor families are the most affected due to the material necessities and tensions created in their households by the economic recession.

11. **MINED has strong experience promoting the socioemotional development of vulnerable students and their families, and has developed a special intervention to respond to the COVID-19 challenges.** MINED implements several programs to promote the development of socioemotional skills among vulnerable groups under the leadership of the MINED's *Consejeria de las Comunidades Educativas*, through periodic workshops with students

called "Growing in Values", meetings with parents and communication campaigns making use of television, radio and social networks. To respond to the COVID-19 context, this project will support MINED to develop and implement a specific strategy to strengthen the capacity of pedagogical advisors, principals and teachers to help students from vulnerable schools and their families to deal with the negative impact of the pandemic and improve their resilience to similar shocks.

12. **To respond to the COVID-19 crisis in the medium and longer-term, MINED is implementing the *National Strategy for Basic and Secondary Education to Face the COVID-19 Challenge* to which this proposed Project is aligned to**. The strategy, with a "nobody stays behind" vision, articulates four stages that are overlapped (see Figure 1): *Stage I: Preventive education for healthcare in the context of face-to-face classes*, covering the current situation of public schools functioning with certain limitations due to the pandemic; *Stage II: Support of remote with emphasis on equity and inclusion*, referring to the potential phase of remote education in case public school closure is formally declared by the national sanitary authority; *Stage III: Mitigation of the impact generated by the pandemic on the return to classes*, referring to the period when all schools re-open and regular classes are back*;* and *Stage IV: Resilience - Learn and prepare for future challenges*, that is a continuous stage-oriented to build a more resilient education system.

Figure 1. Stages of the National Strategy for Basic and Secondary Education to Face the COVID-19 Challenge



13. **The *National Strategy for Basic and Secondary Education to Face the COVID-19 Challenge* objectives are organized in three results areas that** include eight main activities carried out throughout the different stages, each with a distinct focus determined by the needs of each stage. As presented below, in *bold italics*, this project will focus on activities 1.3 and 2.2 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Results areas and activities of the National Strategy for Basic and Secondary Education to Face the COVID-19 Challenge

Results area	Activities
1. Care for the health and well-being of beneficiaries	1.1 Guarding physical health during COVID- 19 and other crises 1.2 Supporting families during COVID-19 and other crises ***1.3 Providing socioemotional support during COVID-19 and other crises (part of this proposed project)*** 1.4 Improving water, sanitation and hygiene conditions in schools *(supported by ACE project – P161029)* 1.5 Providing social support programs
2. Ensuring continuity in learning	2.1 Adapting curriculum to COVID-19 and other risky situations ***2.2. Strengthening teaching skills for curriculum adaptation and teaching management for COVID-19 and other risky situations (part of this proposed project)***
3. Strengthening institutional capacities and strategic partnerships for crisis management	3.1 Expanding MINED's technological communication capacity, for institutional strengthening with COVID-19 and other risk situations

14. **The strategy is being supported by national resources, as well as other national and international organizations that participated in the preparation of the MINED's response strategy and this proposed project**. Domestic resources are being devoted to MINED's COVID-19 National Strategy, covering key areas like communication campaigns, teacher training, learning materials, school management protocols, among others. In addition, multilateral institution, such as UNICEF, the World Food Program - WFP, the Central American Bank - BCIE, as well as bilateral cooperation, such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation - AECDI and South Korea - KOIKA, are supporting the COVID-19 National Strategy through ongoing projects. Finally, international and national NGOs are also aligning its projects to ensure synergies with MINED's initiatives. These international and national organizations are part of the Local Education Group that has actively contributed to the COVID-19 response as well as the design of this proposed project, following the GPE guidelines.

15. **Finally, a WBG education operation supports Nicaragua's COVID-19 response in basic education.** The Alliance for Education Quality Project – ACE (P161029), with a total amount of US$ 55 million focused on improving teacher practices and learning environments in basic education, is effective since 2018 and has been recently restructured to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene to rural schools to respond to the sanitary crisis. An ACE's Additional Financing (P167443), financed entirely by the GPE's Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant – ESPIG (US$ 7.5M), which is expected to become effective in January 2021, will contribute to reinforcing teacher practices and early childhood development and education learning environments.

C. Relevance to Higher Level Objectives

16. **The current Project proposal is well aligned with the World Bank Group's (WBG) FY18-22 Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Nicaragua.** Making a significant impact on prevailing levels of poverty and vulnerability through faster, more inclusive, and sustained growth as well as better access to quality basic services are at the core of the

FY18-22 CPF. At the same time, the proposed Project aims at supporting MINED in the implementation of activities during the recovery and resilience stages remediating and strengthening learning and promoting the well-being of students from vulnerable groups. Therefore, the proposed Project contributes directly to two of the three Strategic Pillars of the CPF: I) Investing in human capital in particular for vulnerable groups, specifically through improved access to quality education and health services and reducing learning disparities; and III) Improving institutions for resilience and sustainability, which supports the GoN in ensuring sustainability and growth by addressing challenges related to natural hazards, external shocks and institutional fragility. in line the World Bank's climate change commitments, the Project incorporates climate change considerations in the project design by including resilience measures and energy efficiency requirements.

17. **The proposal is also part of the Bank's COVID-19 crisis response *Saving Lives, Scaling-Up Impact and Getting Back on Track.*** The World Bank is adjusting its strategic approach to education by supporting the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis, engaging in investments that will support education systems in becoming more responsive, resilient and inclusive. The package supports the Government of Nicaragua to combat the pandemic and its disruptions to the education sector and squarely aligns with Pillars 2 and 4 and supports Pillar 1 of the World Bank's COVID-19 strategy by promoting alignment and coordination among development partners.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Project Development Objective

PDO Statement

18. The Project Development Objectives (PDOs) are to support MINED's COVID-19 response programs conducive to reducing learning gaps; and develop socioemotional skills for vulnerable groups.

PDO Level Indicators

19. Progress towards achieving the PDOs will be measured by the following indicators:
    (i) Children and youth belonging to vulnerable groups[1] that participate in programs to reduce learning gaps (disaggregated by gender) (number)
    (ii) Students in prioritized schools who receive socioemotional support (disaggregated by gender) (number)

[1] Vulnerability in beneficiaries includes: (i) students coming from rural areas or urban periphery; (ii) girls and boys in preschool education; iii) students with disabilities; (iv) students from centers that support the transition from different educational levels and to flexible modalities (i.e. satellite schools); and (v) students who do not have access to electronic devices and connectivity.

B. Project Components

20. **The activities under this Project aim to support MINED's strategy to mitigate the impact of the crisis on vulnerable children and youth and, at the same time, to prepare for the recovery.** The proposed Project's components will support stages I to IV of MINED's COVID-19 national strategy (see Figure 1). Component 1 of the proposed Project will support *Stage I: Non-face-to-face education with an emphasis on equity and inclusion* by helping to recover learning losses, specifically for the most vulnerable students, with pertinent teacher training and didactic workbooks for teachers and students (subcomponent 1.1) and Mobile Digital Classrooms and an adaptive learning pilot (subcomponent 1.2). Activities under Component 2 will support *Stage I: Preventive education for healthcare in the context of face-to-face classes* by supporting the development of a socioemotional support strategy and support programs for school staff, students and families to improve their short-term well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and build on their resilience for future crises. Furthermore, the Project activities under Components 1 and 2 will also support *Stage III: Mitigation of the impact generated by the pandemic on return to classes* and *Stage IV: Resilience: Learn and prepare for future challenges* by assisting in the development of necessary technological tools and capacity-building activities to enable remote education and blended learning in schools.

21. The US$6.65 million Project will have an 18-month implementation period and will include two components, described below.[2]

Component 1. Supporting programs to reduce learning gaps for vulnerable groups in preschool, primary and secondary education (US$4.95 million)

22. **This component focuses on supporting programs to reduce learning-gaps for vulnerable students to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and contributing to the recovery phase**. The component will achieve its objective through two subcomponents whose activities will i) support the delivery of a simplified curriculum based on prioritized curricular content and learning objectives for vulnerable students without access to digital technologies and connectivity, and ii) equip vulnerable primary schools with electronic devices and digital content to complement the learning experience. To speed up implementation, the activities under this component connect to work already underway by MINED and builds on already proven approaches by MINED.

23. <u>Subcomponent 1.1. Supporting the implementation of a prioritized curriculum for vulnerable students.</u> In the short term, this subcomponent aims at implementing a prioritized curriculum for vulnerable students while schools are open. However, all materials developed, and the knowledge generated from the teacher training will be used for all students nationwide in case the national sanitary authorities close public schools and transition to remote learning even if intermittently. This subcomponent will support MINED providing guidance to teachers on which parts of the curriculum to prioritize so they can teach all students without leaving anyone behind and supports teachers and their students to do so with specific learning tools. Under this subcomponent, 577,539 students and 15,885 teachers from 10,305 vulnerable preschool, primary and secondary education schools without access to connectivity and electronic devices both at home and school will be supported. To respond more quickly, the activities under this subcomponent build on initiatives MINED has already developed to respond to the pandemic, such as relying on an already prioritized curriculum and established learning objectives, as well as reinforced channels to train teachers. Activities under this subcomponent will include:

[2] US$0.35 million of the US$6.65 million will be allocated to support the World Bank's supervision of the Project.

(i) The development and reproduction of student and teacher didactic workbooks based on prioritized curricular content and learning objective indicators for all grades, from preschool to the end of secondary education, and including all education delivery modalities (regular, special, distance and multi-grade education). The didactic workbooks will contain learning activities that can be used by teachers to diagnose students' mastery of the content, which will make it easier for teachers to adapt their classes to the level of the students. Given the importance of socioemotional wellbeing during the pandemic and to generate synergies between component 1 and 2, socioemotional principles and content will be included in the materials when appropriate. Additionally, considering the presence of IP/AD in the Caribbean Coast, materials will be contextualized to the bilingual intercultural education within the framework of the COVID-19 National Strategy. Finally, the materials will include content related to climate change where appropriate, to generate learning about emerging topics, such as changes in rainfall patterns, floods and drought.

(ii) Teacher training on the use of the didactic workbooks with a prioritized curriculum and on appropriate pedagogical practices, which respond to the learning needs of students in order to reduce learning gaps. The training activities will take place under measures to prevent and reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to those involved.

(iii) The distribution of the didactic workbooks to students and teachers in targeted schools, according to selection criteria described in the Operations Manual. To ensure delivery of the didactic workbooks in a timely and safe manner, a monitoring and follow-up plan will be developed, which will include a schedule with dates and municipalities where the materials will be delivered by the awarded bidder and the definition and implementation of measures to prevent and reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to those involved. The MINED territorial offices (*Delegación Municipal*) with support from municipal mayors and local education councils and local actors, will be responsible for the distribution of the didactic workbooks from the municipalities to the schools.

24. Subcomponent 1.2. Supporting the use of digital tools in vulnerable primary schools to complement learning. This subcomponent aims to increase access to digital educational content for students in multi-grade primary schools and supports the GoN's national strategy to mitigate and recover students' learning, both in school and at home. This subcomponent provides vulnerable schools with educational technologies, so their students do not fall behind in their education, personalize their education, and even accelerate their learning. The subcomponent will also provide teachers with the necessary training to support these students on the new platforms and tools. Under this subcomponent, 80 multi-grade primary schools without access to connectivity and electronic devices but with the minimum conditions to adapt a Mobile Digital Classroom, plus 39 regular primary schools that already have Mobile Digital Classrooms and connectivity, will be directly targeted and most of the content developed for these activities will be available online for primary schools, teachers and students to use. This activity builds on MINED's existing strategy of Mobile Digital Classrooms, expanding its coverage to rural primary schools.[3] The adaptation of these activities from the previous strategy mitigates risks by taking advantage of design and implementation lessons that will make it possible to carry out this subcomponent more efficiently and quickly. Activities under this subcomponent will include:

(i) The design and development of a system of digital learning platforms and technological tools aligned with the prioritized curricular content and learning objective indicators.

[3] Since 2017, MINED has established a Mobile Digital Classrooms strategy using its own resources and external cooperation projects, with a total of 742 secondary education schools supported nationwide. The initiative has helped to strengthen teaching and learning using educational technologies with innovative pedagogical methods.

(ii) Implementation of a Mobile Digital Classrooms strategy to increase access to digital learning contents for vulnerable students with limited or no connectivity. The project will support the provision of equipment and other digital devices, reinforcement of the required physical conditions along with pedagogical platforms to complement teachers' work in selected schools according to the selection criteria that would be included in the Operations Manual. Minor works, limited to current buildings' footprint, may include reinforcement of ceilings, doors, windows, painting, and electrical and metal work; its execution will be carried out complying with the GoN's national biosafety protocol.[4] The Project will address climate change mitigation and adaption by promoting the purchase and use of energy and resource efficient devices and associated equipment as well as promoting the responsible use of said equipment.

(iii) Implementation of an adaptive learning program through an online platform, which is a data-driven and personalized-learning technique that customizes the content presented to the student based on his or her current learning level and dynamic performance with the system. The digital tools and materials developed under the Project will be piloted in 20 multi-grade schools and 39 regular primary schools that already have technological equipment and connectivity and that will be selected according to specific criteria specified in the Operations Manual.

(iv) The training for teachers on the use of the digital tools to complement and strengthen their instruction. To this end, a training strategy aimed at pedagogical advisors, departmental computer coordinators, directors, and teachers who will serve primary schools will be designed and implemented. The objective of the trainings will be to ensure mastery of the digital tools and interactive educational platforms and all aspects that concern the Mobile Digital Classroom strategy to be implemented. The trainings will be provided by the contracted provider for the provision of technological tools. Trainings will be offered in face-to-face, semi-face-to-face and online modalities.

(v) Increasing the current capacity of the technological infrastructure at the central and departmental level to develop and carryout the above activities. This enhancement includes provision of servers and communication networks for the use of digital platforms and resources, as well as complementary videoconferencing equipment to support related teacher training and learning communities.

Component 2: Support programs to develop socioemotional skills in vulnerable schools (US$1.45 million)

25. **This component aims at mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health and well-being of the education community by providing socioemotional support to school staff, families and students in targeted schools.** This component aims at reinforcing MINED's strategies to develop socioemotional skills in order to support principals, teachers, students and their families to cope with the COVID-19 crisis and other similar shocks. The support provided will have a gender-perspective as girls and young women are a group whose vulnerabilities are heightened by emergencies and disasters (UNFPA, 2020); modules will be designed for school staff and parents with information and materials about gender-associated risks and guidelines to mitigate them. The component will target approximately 900 vulnerable preschool, primary, and secondary education schools who will be benefiting from interventions under subcomponent 1.1. and selected according the criteria stablished in the operational manual. The development of the socioemotional support strategy and its implementation will be built on the existing MINED's strategies and the contribution provided by the GLE, IP/AD and the Cabinet of Persons with Disabilities during preparation and will feed from the specific consultations with IP/AD to take place at the start of

[4] These initiatives will be coordinated with the CARCIP project that will connect 18 communities on the Caribbean coast, including 5 schools, in addition to 14 health centers. Managed by the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Service, and Digital Development of the World Bank.

implementation and the 6-month consultation milestone. This component will be complemented by UNICEF and UNFPA's contribution to the strategy, each one supporting 51 and 17 additional schools, respectively. The component is sub-divided into the following two subcomponents.

26. Subcomponent 2.1. Developing a socioemotional support strategy for school staff. This subcomponent aims at developing a strategy and providing socioemotional support to schools´ staff by strengthening the socioemotional competencies of pedagogical advisors, counseling liaisons, directors, deputy directors and teachers and provide them with timely support in certain contexts. All the activities supported under this subcomponent will be socio-culturally appropriate for IP/AD and will include guidelines to help principals and teachers to provide differentiated resources to mitigate gender-associated risks. Activities under this subcomponent will include:

    (i) Developing a socioemotional support strategy for school staff, students and their families of preschool, primary and secondary education schools. The project will finance an international or national technical assistance for this activity.

    (ii) Designing training materials, including course guidelines and manuals for school principals and teachers on how to promote self-care, documents to provide socioemotional support, how to promote socioemotional support for families, how to develop socioemotional skills in students through school activities, and how to identify risks for girls and young women through the Early Warning System already in implementation by MINED, and recommendations to alleviate them.

27. Subcomponent 2.2. Implementing a socioemotional support strategy for school staff, students and their families. This subcomponent aims at providing socioemotional support to the education community by strengthening and promoting the socioemotional competencies and well-being of school staff, parents and students. Activities in this subcomponent will include:

    (i) Delivering an online course for socioemotional support aimed at pedagogical advisors, counselors, directors, deputy directors and teachers.

    (ii) Providing "self-care spaces" in the form of bi-weekly meetings for participating directors, deputy directors and teachers, which will be led by MINED to foster socioemotional skills through practical activities, such as games, meditation, breathing, dance, among other activities, complying with GoN national biosafety protocol. Participants of the "self-care spaces" will participate in an evaluation process to collect their impressions regarding the environment, content and methodology in order to assess its relevance.

    (iii) Providing practical information for families on how to provide socioemotional support at home, be aware of socioemotional risks associated with gender or disabilities, and how to mitigate and alleviate threats and dangers for girls and young women.

    (iv) Delivering sessions for students in dedicated time slots during the school day, guided by teachers to encourage students' expression of emotions and feelings through play, art and creativity, while promoting their emotional well-being and learning. The project will support the design, printing and distribution of socio-culturally appropriate guides and supportive materials for parents and families, and recreational kits, including hygiene products (e.g. liquid soap and hand sanitizer) and fungible play materials (e.g. scissors, glue, markers, toys) to be used by. MINED will complement this activity with informative monthly sessions complying with biosafety protocols with parents on how to provide socioemotional support to their children at home and be knowledgeable about risks associated with gender and disabilities heightened by the

pandemic. Parents' sessions will also be used to receive feedback on a regular basis to improve the support strategy.

Component 3: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (US$0.25 million)

28. **This component will support the management of the Project.** It will focus on strengthening MINED's teams working on fiduciary management, social and environmental standards, and Project implementation. Financing for technical assistance for Project implementation will also be included.

C. Project Beneficiaries

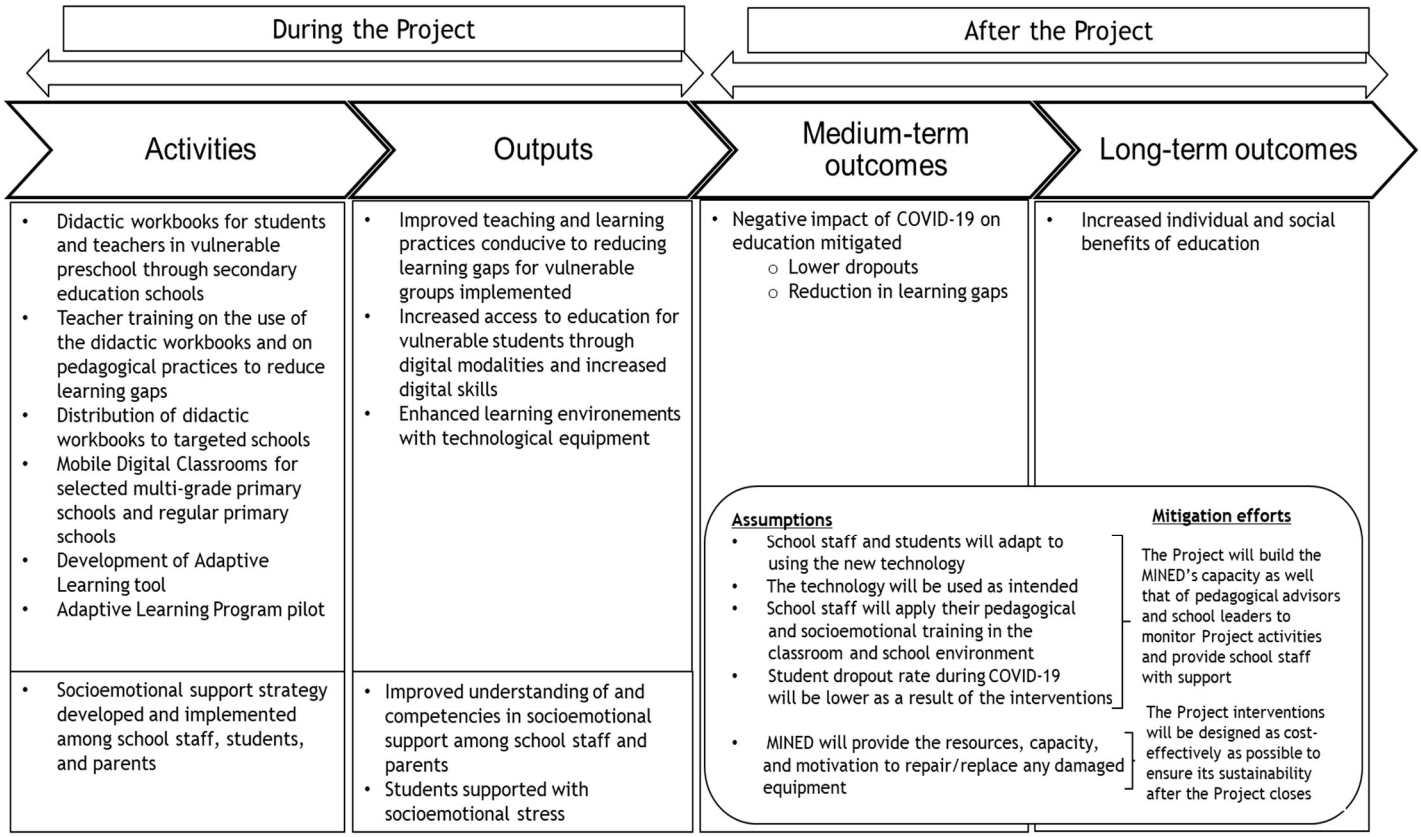
29. This Project will support approximately 707,514 students (around 50 percent of the total preschool, primary, secondary and special education student population), 19,935 education personnel, and 36,000 parents of preschool, primary, secondary and special education schools located in vulnerable areas, which are mostly rural and serving students from impoverished communities, including indigenous and afro-descendent children and youth from the Caribbean Coast. Project activities under Component 1 will target about 585,454 students and 16,147 teachers in preschool, primary and secondary public schools. Specifically, this includes approximately 577,539 students and 15,885 teachers in preschool, primary and secondary education without connectivity that will be supported with the didactic workbooks under subcomponent 1.1. Subcomponent 1.2 will support 7,915 students and 262 teachers in 80 multi-grade primary schools and 39 regular primary schools' Mobile Digital Classrooms or the adaptive learning pilot program. Component 2 will target approximately 122,060 students, 36,000 parents, and 788 pedagogical advisors, liaisons from the Council of Educational Communities, school principals and assistant principals, and teachers and community educators serving 900 preschool, primary, and special education schools affected by the pandemic.

D. Results Chain

30. The theory of change of the Project is presented in Figure 2. It is based on the premise that by tackling two of the most immediate negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in learning gaps and the decline in well-being, this will reduce the longer term impact of this shock on the education system, ultimately reducing the human capital loss. This finding is backed by international evidence that suggests that while negative life events may increase the chance of student dropout, the incidence of dropout is lower when students feel a sense of academic and social support, contributing to greater motivation to persist in their education.[5]

Figure 2. Project's results chain

The Project Development Objectives (PDOs) are to support MINED's COVID-19 response programs conducive to reducing learning gaps; and develop socioemotional skills for vulnerable groups.



E. Rationale for Bank Involvement and Role of Partners

31. The World Bank is uniquely positioned to maximize the impact of the GPE's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding available for Nicaragua. The Bank has the advantage of being able to leverage its policy dialogue and operational support through existing project implementation arrangements and mobilizing its breadth of education knowledge from worldwide efforts to mitigate the shocks and risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, given that the WBG also

[5] Samuel, R., & Burger, K. (2020). Negative life events, self-efficacy, and social support: Risk and protective factors for school dropout intentions and dropout. Journal of Educational Psychology, 112(5), 973-986. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/edu0000406.

manages the regular Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (ESPIG)[6] for preschool education financing and the ACE Project, having the same implementation agency for this accelerated funding will ensure consistency across all three programs, especially because there have been extensive discussions with MINED about how to best organize and coordinate these multiple funds to maximize their value to the country.

32. The proposed Project is part of a comprehensive COVID-19 National Strategy developed by MINED. As a result, complementary activities will be implemented in parallel and financed by the government and other donors. To ensure the alignment between all the key stakeholders, the monitoring an evaluation of both the COVID-19 strategy and the proposed Project will be carried out in coordination with the active Local Education Group.[7]

F. Lessons Learned and Reflected in the Project Design

33. **The Project focuses on providing relevant inputs (e.g. tools, knowledge, data) to MINED to better mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nicaragua's education system.** Many lessons have been learned during the years of joint work between the World Bank and MINED. The most relevant lessons have been taken into consideration in the design of the Project and are presented below.

34. **Building on existing strategies, institutional mechanisms, and related programs.** To ensure coherence and synergy with other activities carried out by MINED and other donors providing support to face the pandemic, the components of the Project are fully aligned with MINED´s National Strategy to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in the education system. Furthermore, this Project does not include elements unknown to MINED. On the contrary, it builds on MINED´s previous and current experiences that have proven to be positive and are considered relevant in the context of the pandemic. For example, the component on Mobile Digital Classrooms will replicate an experience already tested by MINED and which proved to have good results. Furthermore, the Project builds on the developments and learnings gained from the current World Bank supported ACE Project, which supports strengthening MINED's institutional capacity and improving teacher practices for selected preschool, primary, and secondary education teachers nationwide. Finally, the Project activities will be managed by the relevant departments within MINED, which fosters institutional ownership and alignments toward the desired results.

35. **Focusing on few activities with clear results.** The nature of the context requires timely interventions that lead to fast results. The design of all Project's components focuses on providing content-specific material to teachers and students, equipping targeted schools with digital devices and resources, and providing socioemotional support to the school community. Involving fewer technical teams contributes to better coordination and integration for the implementation of activities.

36. **Learning from international experience, especially in the use of socioemotional support tools to respond to crises.** MINED's current COVID-19 strategy for socioemotional support has been strengthened by incorporating international experience and tools to promote socioemotional skills to those most affected during the crisis. At the same time, the Project ensures an integrated approach across all the activities that involves the whole school community: school directors, teachers, students as well as their family.
37. **Building on lessons to distribute material in Nicaragua.** Distribution of material to Nicaragua's remote areas has been a constant challenge throughout the education portfolio activities. The proposed Project captures relevant

[6] ESPIG is a trust fund grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that will also fund the additional financing for the ACE Project that is currently under preparation.
[7] Comprised by governmental entities, multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies and civil society.

lessons learned by MINED in the recent years, like requesting providers to distribute the materials to Municipal Delegations and coordinating with local actors to facilitate distribution to schools as part of the shared responsibility model promoted by the Government, or using MINED's other strategies that have been supported and improved in the framework of the ACE Project.

III. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

A. Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

38. The Grant activities will be implemented by MINED in accordance with the current arrangements under the Project Alliance for Educational Quality (ACE - P161029) and following the Project's Operations Manual. MINED will be responsible for the implementation of all the proposed activities through a Project Support Team (PST) composed of its existing organizational structure and line departments (See Annex 1). The Vice Minister of Administrative Affairs of MINED will be the Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator is supported by a Project Support Team that is responsible for the supervision of all Project activities, including quality control of documents sent to the Bank's no objection, as well as ensuring the timely completion of Project activities. This Project Support Team is led by a Project Team Leader, who will be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and supervision activities financed by the grant and specified in the Project's Operations Manual. Implementation of Project activities will be carried out by the relevant technical directorates. MINED will also coordinate and collaborate closely with its departmental and municipal delegations, depending on the areas prioritized by the Grant.

B. Results Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

39. The PST will be responsible for tracking progress related to Project outcomes and results on a day-to-day basis. MINED's General Directorate of Educational Planning and Programming will be responsible for collecting administrative data (including from other directorates involved in implementation), monitoring results, and assessing progress toward the PDO.

C. Sustainability

40. Although the activities supported by this Project aim to mitigate the short-term negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education achievement and student well-being, the three interventions will strengthen teaching practices and allow for a better recovery, as the knowledge acquired by the teachers will last beyond the Project duration. Additionally, given that the strategy to develop the didactic workbooks implies the prioritization of learning objective indicators and content that will contribute to leveling and consolidating learning in the context of COVID-19 and in any other event that may disrupt the development of educational plans and programs, and cause irregularity in student attendance, the new materials will very likely be relevant beyond the COVID-19 emergency. In that context, MINED will ensure the sustainability of these learning materials after Project closure. Regarding the interventions under subcomponent 1.2 (mobile digital classrooms), these are being designed as cost-effectively as possible to ensure their sustainability after the Project closes, through actions already established through MINED's Institutional Operational Plan and annual budget for Current Expenditure. Finally, although the package of materials to support students' socioemotional well-being will not be sustained in the long run, as it is designed to respond to the emergency, the whole education community will have an increased capacity to understand their emotions, take care of themselves and support the socioemotional development of children when the Project closes.

IV. PROJECT APPRAISAL SUMMARY

A. Technical, Economic and Financial Analysis (if applicable)

41. **The Project, which aims to alleviate the consequences of COVID-19 that are affecting the education system, is extremely relevant to the Nicaraguan context**. Specifically, the Project will reduce learning gaps and mitigate shocks to well-being, which are the two main ways the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the education system in Nicaragua. It will also focus on supporting multiple vulnerable groups through the different activities designed. This focus is essential, as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt more greatly by these populations.

42. **The Project's design is technically sound, as it is informed by robust global evidence and the local context and experience, and considers complementary interventions to maximize effectiveness.** The Project activities have been designed by adapting successful learning interventions focused on instructional materials and associated pedagogy[8], instructional technology[9], and socioemotional support programs[10], as well as by building on existing experiences in the country and in other similar contexts with proven implementation strategies. Additionally, the Project is expected to generate synergies and increase its cost-effectiveness by aligning with MINED's education response strategy, which includes water and sanitation interventions that will be implemented under the restructured ACE Project.

43. **The economic analysis estimates a cost benefit ratio of 11.32 with an internal rate of return of 8.89%.** The Project will produce monetary benefits derived from the reduction in learning gaps, the prevention of a likely rise in school

[8] McEwan (2015) in "Improving Learning in Primary Schools of Developing Countries: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Experiments," documents consistently positive effects of programs relying on instructional materials, particularly if coupled with relevant teacher training.
[9] In surveying the evidence on educational technology, Escueta, Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (forthcoming) in "Upgrading Education with Technology: Insights from Experimental Research" show that computer-adapted learning programs, particularly when personalization is involved, are among the most cost-effective interventions.
[10] In "Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects," Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, and Weissberg (2017) present strong impacts for socioemotional programs.

dropouts and the increase in quality of education. Specifically, the Project provides education programs to children who have been affected by an irregular school year with considerable stresses both at home and at school and whose learning has been disrupted. Without an appropriate intervention to address the risks of COVID-19, Nicaraguan students are likely to experience a loss in learning adjusted years of schooling (LAYS). Partly relying on the World Bank Country Tool for simulating the potential impacts of COVID-19[11], it is anticipated that under an intermediate scenario in the absence of the Project, Nicaraguans would see a reduction in the expected years of schooling from the pre-Covid-19 levels of 7.3 to 6.8. This reduction in schooling is mitigated by the Project and the benefit estimations for this analysis stem from the difference between a scenario without the Project (a counterfactual) and one with the Project mitigating the learning losses, preventing likely school dropouts and increasing the quality of education.

44. **Specifically, we see five channels by which students will see measurable benefits from this Project.** The channels we used for the quantification of the benefits are: (i) workbooks for teachers and students of all grades from preschool to upper secondary; (ii) Mobile Digital Classrooms for students in primary schools, (iii) digital tools and content for primary school students with connectivity; (iv) the adaptive learning pilot program for a subset of primary school students to enhance their learning with a personalized learning experience; and (v) socioemotional support provided to students to cope with the different challenges of COVID-19. While the socioemotional support is also offered to school staff and students' families, we are only quantifying the benefits of the direct support to students. We then base our estimations on the relevant academic literature to determine the effect of each component on education outcomes and future wages.

45. **We used statistics specific to the Nicaraguan economy and education sector for the estimation of benefits.** To estimate future wages and given the high levels of informality in the labor market in Nicaragua, we use the latest official GDP per capita US$ 2,029 (2018) as a proxy for average earnings. Moreover, the analysis is based on the following assumptions (i) students benefiting from the program enter the workforce at an average age of 22 years old; (ii) following the COVID-19 simulator tool, we assume 45 average working years, which means that they retire at 67 years old; (iii) labor force participation of 33 percent; (iv) the Mobile Digital Classrooms are assumed to benefit four cohorts of students, without further investment to replace the technology; (vi) the socioemotional support is assumed to have two years of impact. Finally, the Project financing costs represent the stream of costs used for this analysis.

46. **Moreover, there are important individual and social gains from investing in education and socioemotional development.** Nonetheless, many of them cannot be captured in this analysis due to data restrictions and benefits that are not quantifiable in nature. For our analysis, we focus on specific channels of Component 1 and 2 that have tangible benefits observed in the form of labor productivity and wages once the beneficiaries enter the labor market. The Project offers a comprehensive education response that will aid students to accumulate years of schooling as well as increase the quality of education, which in turn reduces the likelihood of dropping out and is especially crucial for vulnerable students.

[11] Joao Pedro Azevedo, Koen Geven, Diana Goldemberg, Amer Hasan, Syedah Aroob Iqbal (2020) "Country tool for simulating the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on schooling and learning outcomes, Version 5". World Bank, Washington DC.

B. Fiduciary

(i) Financial Management

47. MINED's General Division for Program and Project Coordination (*Division General de Coordinación de Programas y Proyectos*, DGCPP) is responsible for overall Project coordination and management, including budgeting and financial monitoring and control. The Administrative and Financial General Division (*División General Administrativa Financiera*, DGAF) is responsible for the administrative and Financial Management (FM) functions, including accounting, treasury, supporting financial control, auditing, and disbursements, according to the regulations and directives issued by the Ministry of Finance, all through the Finance Division (*División Financiera*, DF). Also reporting to the DGAF, the Administrative Division (*División Administrativa*, DA), is responsible for managing and controlling the Project's physical assets. Additional staff is financed by the Project to support and strengthen the DF already in place for the ACE Project and MINED is not expected to require complementary staff to manage the FM function for this Project.

48. This Project will follow the same budgeting arrangements as the current WBG ACE Project. The DGCPP is responsible for budget management and execution control; Project funds are incorporated in the National Budget and follow national budget law and regulations. For every fiscal year, a budget is submitted to the National Assembly for approval. The budget submitted is prepared in coordination with the different administrative and technical units within MINED participating in Project activities and consolidated by the DGCPP in coordination with the DF. The budget is managed and controlled in the institutional FM system managed and controlled by the Ministry of Finance (*Sistema Integrado de Gestión Administrativa Financiera*, SIGAF), through which Project accounting records are maintained.

49. Project accounting records are kept, maintained and incorporated in the institutional FM system managed and controlled by the Ministry of Finance, SIGAF, in operation since January 2018. Parallel accounting records are also kept in the FM system used by MINED (*Sistema de Información Administrativo Financiero*, SIAF), which separately records Project transactions in U.S. dollar, allowing to control the use of Project funds by Component, Subcomponent and Disbursement Category, as well as to produce Project financial reports and statements (interim unaudited financial reports and financial statements to be audited). As these two systems are not interfaced, periodic reconciliations are conducted to reconcile the Project financial information they record and report. Budget management and control are also conducted through the SIGAF. It is worth noting, the SIGAF is not currently able to produce Project financial reports and statements, as this functionality is under development.

50. Annual audits of Project financial statements and eligibility of expenditures will be performed in accordance with Bank policy and an independent audit firm acceptable to the Bank will conduct the Project audits. The cost of the audit will be covered by the ACE Project and the audit Terms of Reference will need to be amended.

51. The FM supervision program will include at least two FM reviews per year, either as a standalone review or as part of the overall Project implementation support, physically or virtually if conditions do not allow for on-site supervision. FM supervision will also be conducted through the review of the Project's financial reports and audit reports.

(ii) Procurement

52. Procurement for the Project will be carried out in accordance with the World Bank's 'Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers' dated July 2016 (revised in November 2017 and August 2018). The Project will be subject to the World Bank's Anti-Corruption Guidelines, dated October 15, 2006 (revised January 2011 and July 1, 2016). The Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) will be used to plan, record, and track procurement transactions.

53. A Project Procurement Strategy for Development (PPSD) will be required as per the requirements of the World Bank Section III of the WBG Policy on IPF for Procurement in Situations of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, the approval of the final simplified PPSD has been deferred to the Project implementation phase.

54. A virtual procurement capacity assessment of the implementing agency was conducted as part of Project preparation. The PST has had previous exposure implementing the World Bank's procurement framework and procurement specialists have the knowledge, capacity and experience required. Some of the risks envisioned are: (i) lack of availability of certain goods due to increased world-wide demand and/or significant price increases, which may delay contractual delivery; (ii) problems with the timely distribution of all the procured goods/services; and (iii) governance-related issues common in emergency situations. A series of mitigation measures will be implemented to ensure that the procurement functions are carried out satisfactorily, including (a) incorporating a procurement section in the POM that defines roles, responsibilities, and timeframes for executing procurement functions; (b) use of local providers and/or current providers; (c) procurement arrangements to include distribution; (d) publication of all processes, including contracts/purchase orders details.

C. Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

D. Environmental and Social

55. **The Project will mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing two of its key impacts on students - increased learning gaps and well-being deterioration.** It will prioritize the most vulnerable groups (including indigenous peoples and afro descendants as well as schools in rural and remote areas). While improvements to school infrastructure will be required to support the establishment and operation of digital classrooms and expansion of technological capacity under subcomponent 1.2; they are expected to be minor, without any impacts beyond the actual footprint of existing schools. Potential environmental impacts include those associated with the management of waste, worker and community health and safety and the risks of exposure to COVID-19 as a result of infrastructure improvement activities, distribution of workbooks and face-to-face training for teachers and families. Potential social risks and impacts are related to the exclusion of vulnerable groups, including IP/AD, persons with disabilities and remote communities, if their specific needs and circumstances are not properly addressed in the development of workbooks, socioemotional support efforts and implementation of digital classrooms.

56. **While the environmental risk is low, the combined Environmental and Social (E&S) risk rating is Moderate,** driven by contextual social factors and borrower's capacity, namely (i) work with multiple and diverse indigenous groups dispersed nationally; (ii) implementation challenges in remote and difficult to access areas, (iii) MINED's lack of experience with the requirements of the Environmental and Social Framework; and, (iv) an unstable socio-political context exacerbated by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

57. **To support project preparation with condensed procedures under paragraph 12 of the Investment Policy Financing policy in response to COVID-19, the project has adopted a two-phased preparation of E&S instruments.** MINED developed, consulted, and disclosed by appraisal a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), including a project-level Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) and an Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). Consultations for these instruments took place in line with the World Bank's recommendations to avoid in-person gatherings as much as possible, using virtual interactive meetings, emails, and telephone calls. Consultations included the Local Group of Education (GLE), comprised by governmental entities, multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies and civil society, as part of an ongoing dialogue as well as through virtual meeting with IP/AD representatives and organizations working with persons with disabilities. Results of consultations were documented in the SEP and integrated into project design. In addition, MINED will update, consult, and disclose within 60 days of effectiveness: (a) the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) of ACE, including labor management measures with a dedicated GRM for project workers, (b) the Indigenous Peoples Plan of ACE and; (c) the IPPF of ACE. The ESCP will reflect the Government of Nicaragua's commitments to implement the E&S instruments and periodically report on compliance.

58. **The Project Management Unit will include environmental and social specialists** that will support compliance and will be responsible for reporting to the WB on the project's E&S commitments.

V. GRIEVANCE REDRESS SERVICES

59. Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a World Bank (WB) supported Project may submit complaints to existing Project-level grievance redress mechanisms or the WB's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address Project-related concerns. Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaint to the WB's independent Inspection Panel, which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of WB non-compliance with its policies and procedures. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the World Bank's attention, and Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank's corporate Grievance Redress Service (GRS), please visit http://www.worldbank.org/en/Projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank Inspection Panel, please visit www.inspectionpanel.org.

VI. KEY RISKS

60. **The overall risk implementation risk of the Project is considered Substantial**. A summary of the risks and their ratings

can be found in Table 2. A description of the substantial risks includes Political and Governance, Macroeconomic, Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Sustainability, and Other risks, which are explained below along with the Project's efforts to mitigate these risks.

Table 2. The key risks summarized in the Systematic Operations Risk-Rating Tool (SORT)

Risk Category	Rating
1. Political and Governance	Substantial
2. Macroeconomic	Substantial
3. Sector Strategies and Policies	Moderate
4. Technical Design of Project or Program	Moderate
5. Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Sustainability	Substantial
6. Fiduciary	Moderate
7. Environment and Social	Moderate
8. Stakeholders	Moderate
9. Other	Substantial
OVERALL	**Substantial**

61. **The Substantial Political and Governance risk** is derived from the country's current sociopolitical context following the April 2018 crisis, which could deteriorate due to the negative health and economic impacts of the pandemic. To mitigate this risk, all activities proposed under this Project have been validated through several consultations held with the Local Education Group. Likewise, the design and preparation of this Project has been carried out in close coordination with MINED's technical staff to ensure full ownership of the activities. Additionally, the GoN has established among its budget guidelines, the protection of social spending, to guarantee the education and well-being of the Nicaraguan population.

62. **The Macroeconomic risk is also assessed as Substantial** given slower than expected growth since 2018, which is likely to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and Nicaragua's limited range of fiscal policy tools to manage the economic cycle and buffer shocks. To address this risk, the Project targets the vulnerable populations that are most at risk of falling further into poverty because of these shocks, further guaranteeing their continued access to basic education services and increasing their resilience to shocks. The complementarity of this Project with other sources of financing further contributes to the sustainability of the proposed activities even in case of an economic downturn.

63. **The Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Sustainability is assessed as Substantial**, in line with the rating for the other Projects in the Nicaragua education portfolio. This rating is due to the ongoing efforts to consolidate coordination between MINED's technical and fiduciary teams and its weak information systems, and technical capacity that needs to be strengthened to adapt to various scenarios, including the given context. To mitigate this risk, the ongoing ACE Project (P161029) has helped build capacity in the country to comply with the Bank's procurement and fiduciary procedures. Additionally, the Bank team will continue its close supervision and capacity building of MINED, through technical assistance, to ensure timely implementation.

64. **The "Other" risk assessed as Substantial is related to how sanitary measures implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic could affect project management and supervision.** If the health crisis increases, during the Project cycle, key supervision activities may be affected, such as consultative meetings, visits to beneficiary schools and interactions with beneficiary communities, given that the application of the biosecurity protocol or sanitary measures would have to be applied in all its intensity. For this, the work team and the MINED are being trained, and the use of new

instruments, such as the Geo-Enabling Monitoring System - GEMS, will be valued. Likewise, the restrictions and measures caused by COVID-19 could also affect the availability of supplies at the local level, delaying activities. For this, market studies will be carried out, and additional exceptional measures will be coordinated to ensure the essential inputs necessary for the response of the education sector.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND MONITORING

Results Framework

COUNTRY: Nicaragua

Nicaragua COVID-19 Education Sector Response

Project Development Objectives(s)

The Project Development Objectives (PDOs) are to support MINED's COVID-19 response programs conducive to reducing learning gaps; and develop socioemotional skills for vulnerable groups.

Project Development Objective Indicators

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets	End Target
			1	
Support MINED's COVID-19 response programs conducive to reducing learning gaps				
Children and youth belonging to vulnerable groups that participate in programs to reduce learning gaps (Number)		0.00	223,936.00	497,636.00
Percentage of female beneficiaries (Number)		0.00	50.00	50.00
Percentage of students from rural areas who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps. (Number)		0.00	55.00	55.00
Percentage of students belonging to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps. (Number)		0.00	8.00	8.00
Develop socioemotional skills for vulnerable groups				

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets	End Target
			1	
Students in prioritized schools who receive socioemotional support (Number)		0.00	46,688.00	103,751.00
Percentage of students who belong to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who are served by the socio-emotional support strategy, by gender (Number)		0.00	8.00	8.00
Percentage of girls who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy. (Number)		0.00	50.00	50.00
Percentage of students from the rural area who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy. (Number)		0.00	55.00	55.00

Intermediate Results Indicators by Components

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets	End Target
			1	
Reducing learning gaps in initial preschool, primary and secondary education				
Availability and operability of a digital platform with adaptive learning tools in primary education, aligned with the Nicaraguan curriculum (Yes/No)		No	No	Yes
Multi-grade primary schools implementing the Mobile Digital Classrooms program (Number)		0.00	19.00	68.00
Number of times students use the adaptive learning platform throughout the project. (Number)		0.00	0.00	254,684.00
Educational centers benefiting from the strategy to reduce learning gaps for students without		0.00	3,942.00	8,759.00

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets	End Target
			1	
connectivity (Number)				
Special Education schools benefiting from the strategy to reduce learning gaps for students without connectivity (Number)		0.00	11.00	25.00
Teachers trained in accelerated learning methodologies to mitigate learning loss due to COVID-19 (Number)		0.00	6,176.00	13,725.00
Children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning since the pandemic started (Number)		0.00	196,363.00	490,908.00
Strengthening the well-being of the education community				
Schools implementing the socioemotional support strategy (Number)		0.00	153.00	765.00
Educational staff trained in the socio-emotional accompaniment course (Number)		0.00	664.00	3,220.00
Cross-cutting indicators				
Communications received through the GRM that were resolved in accordance with the planned procedure (Percentage) (Percentage)		0.00	90.00	90.00
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning (CRI, Number)		0.00	223,936.00	497,636.00
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning - Female (CRI, Number)		0.00	50.00	50.00
Mothers and fathers who provided feedback on the monthly meetings and support materials received to reinforce the learning of socio-emotional skills (By gender) (Number) (Number)		0.00	0.00	2,700.00
Socioemotional support strategy focused to students, parents and school staff includes information about the risks associated with gender in the situations that affect the emotional		No	Yes	Yes

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets	End Target
			1	
well-being (Yes/No)				

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan: PDO Indicators					
Indicator Name	**Definition/Description**	**Frequency**	**Datasource**	**Methodology for Data Collection**	**Responsibility for Data Collection**
Children and youth belonging to vulnerable groups that participate in programs to reduce learning gaps	Number of students in initial pre-school, primary and secondary education levels in vulnerable situations (as defined in the Operations Manual), beneficiaries of the didactic booklets and of the Mobile Digital Classroom programs, educational technology platforms and adaptive learning platform: 490,908 students for didactic booklets, 3,441 students for learning with educational platforms, and 3,287 students for adaptive learning.	Biannual	Record of students participating in the project activities, relevant to this indicator (as detailed in the description).	Students who participate in project activities relevant to this indicator will be monitored and registered, as defined in the description. The information will be presented in the chapter corresponding to the indicator in the semi-annual follow-up and monitoring report.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Percentage of female beneficiaries	Percentage of female	Biannual	Record of	Females students who	Directorate of

	beneficiaries out of the total children and youth that participate in programs to reduce learning gaps		students participating in the project activities, relevant to this indicator (as detailed in the description).	participate in project activities relevant to this indicator will be monitored and registered, as defined in the description. The information will be presented in the chapter corresponding to the indicator in the semi-annual follow-up and mon itoring report.	Educational Programming
Percentage of students from rural areas who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps.	Percentage of students from rural areas who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps.	Biannual	List of students in rural areas.	Students from rural areas will be monitored and registered.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Percentage of students belonging to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps.	Percentage of students belonging to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who participate in programs to reduce learning gaps.	Biannual	List of students belonging to Indigenous Peoples.	Students belonging to indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants will be monitored and registered.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Students in prioritized schools who receive socioemotional support	Number of students who participate and are benefited in the activities included in the social-emotional support strategy of component 2 of the project.	Biannual	Record of students who participate in the activities of the socioemotional support strategy	Students who participate in project activities relevant to this indicator will be monitored and registered, as defined in the description. The information will be	Directorate of Ministries of Educational Communities

			(Component 2).	presented in the chapter corresponding to the indicator in the semi-annual follow-up and mon itoring report.	
Percentage of students who belong to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants who are served by the socio-emotional support strategy, by gender	Percentage of students belonging to indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, broken down by boys and girls.	Biannual	List of participants belonging to Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples that are benefited with the strategy.	Students belonging to the 5 school centers geographically located in Indigenous and Afro-descendant Communities will be considered.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Percentage of girls who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy.	Percentage of girl students who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy.	Biannual	List of participants who are women.	Record of girls who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Percentage of students from the rural area who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy.	Percentage of students belonging to educational centers that are located in rural areas.	Biannual	Record of participants in rural areas.	Record of participants who are benefited by the social-emotional support strategy.	Directorate of Educational Programming

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan: Intermediate Results Indicators					
Indicator Name	**Definition/Description**	**Frequency**	**Datasource**	**Methodology for Data Collection**	**Responsibility for Data Collection**
Availability and operability of a digital platform with adaptive learning tools in primary education, aligned with the Nicaraguan curriculum	Existence and operability of a digital platform that uses adaptive learning technologies, whose contents have been adapted and aligned with the Nicaraguan curriculum, in 80 percent of the 34 regular primary schools and the 20 multigrade primary schools.	Biannual	Platform development progress reports. Once operational, record of access / use of students from the selected schools.	The implementation of the digital platform will be monitored. Progress will be reported in the biannual reports. Once the p latform is operational, data related to the use of the platform by the students of the selected schools will be included in the biannual monitoring reports on the implementation of the project.	General Directorate of Primary
Multi-grade primary schools implementing the Mobile Digital Classrooms program	Number of multigrade schools with a functional mobile digital classroom as described in Component 1.	Biannual	Information from the asset management system/MINED inventory. Monitoring report.	Certificates of Reception and Delivery in each Educational Center where the program will be implemented. Follow-up report o n the use of the Mobile Digital Classrooms delivered.	General Directorate of Multigrade Primary
Number of times students use the	Number of times that	Biannual	Reports	The adaptive learning	General Directorate of

adaptive learning platform throughout the project.	students in regular primary and multigrade schools who will have access to the adaptive learning platform use it in the life of the project. Students are expected to use the platform 3 times a week and the goal is calculated based on the number of weeks they will have access to the platform in the life of the project for regular and multigrade primary schools.		generated by the adaptive learning software incorporated in the Mobile Digital Classrooms financed by the project.	software built into the Mobile Digital Classrooms will produce reports with the number of times each user used the system. This information will be systematized in a report as proof of compliance with this indicator.	Primary Education
Educational centers benefiting from the strategy to reduce learning gaps for students without connectivity	Number of selected educational centers in which the didactic booklets are used, includes: 8,722 educational centers, 1,518 community preschools outside centers, and 65 circles of III and IV Cycle of Youth and Adult Sections.	Biannual	List of selected educational centers and evidence of receipt and use of didactic booklets.	Preparation of Report indicating the educational centers that received the didactic booklets, description of their use, containing strengthened aspects and number of participants.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Special Education schools benefiting from the strategy to reduce learning gaps for students without connectivity	Number of selected Special education schools.	Number of Special Education centers selected.	List of selected Special Education centers and evidence of receipt and	Report indicating the Special Education centers that received the didactic booklets, description of their use, containing strengthened aspects	Directorate of Educational Programming

			use of didactic booklets.	and number of participants.	
Teachers trained in accelerated learning methodologies to mitigate learning loss due to COVID-19	Number of teachers trained in the use of didactic booklets and the adaptive learning program for mobile digital classrooms, includes: 13,502 teachers trained in the use of didactic booklets, 102 teachers in adaptive platforms, and 121 teachers in educational platforms.	Biannual	List of teachers trained.	Report containing strengthened aspects and list of participants.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Children whose learning was assessed to evaluate loss of learning since the pandemic started	Number of students who were evaluated in their learning as part of the didactic booklets strategy and the mobile digital classroom programs, educational technology platforms and adaptive learning platform. It is expected that the beneficiary students of these programs will be diagnosed on their level of learning at the beginning of these. Additionally, programs may evaluate students in their learning at other times of	Biannual	Statistics of students who participated in the evaluation.	Report with statistics of students who participated in the evaluation.	Directorate of Educational Programming

	implementation.				
Schools implementing the socioemotional support strategy	Number of educational centers benefiting from the activities related to the social-emotional support strategy included in Component 2 of the project.	Biannual	Report issued by the directors about the implementation of the social-emotional support activities included in the project.	Report containing the number of schools that implemented the social-emotional support activities included in the project, and a brief description of the results.	Directorate of Educational Communities Liaisons
Educational staff trained in the socio-emotional accompaniment course	Number of Advisors, Counseling Liaisons, Directors, Deputy Directors and teachers within the national education system who completed the training on socio-emotional accompaniment included in the project.	Biannual	List of participants who completed the training.	Report containing the list of educational personnel who completed the course, and brief conclusions about it.	Directorate of Educational Communities Liaisons
Communications received through the GRM that were resolved in accordance with the planned procedure (Percentage)	This indicator measure the percentage of comments submitted through the Project's Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRMs) that were address satisfactorily according to the established mechanism as a percentage	Biannual	Documentation generated by the GRM.	Summary report of the communications received by the GRM and a summary of the solutions / responses given to all of them.	Directorate for the Coordination of Programs and Projects

	of all communications received through the GRMs (Mecanismo de Preocupaciones, Quejas, Sugerencias y Respuestas, MPQSR) for Components 1 and 2 of the Project. The targets for this indicator are cumulative, calculated based on the total number of complaints received since the launch of the GRMs.				
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning		Biannual	Record of students participating in the project activities, relevant to this indicator (as detailed in the description).	Students who participate in project activities relevant to this indicator will be monitored and registered, as defined in the description. The information will be presented in the chapter corresponding to the indicator in the semi-annual follow-up and mon itoring report.	Directorate of Educational Programming
Students benefiting from direct interventions to enhance learning - Female		Biannual	Records of female students participating in the project	Percentage of female students who participate in project activities relevant to this indicator will be	Directorate of Educational Programming

			activities, relevant to this indicator (as detailed in the description).	monitored and registered, as defined in the description. The information will be presented in the chapter corresponding to the indicator in the semi-annual follow-up and monitoring report.	
Mothers and fathers who provided feedback on the monthly meetings and support materials received to reinforce the learning of socio-emotional skills (By gender) (Number)	Number of fathers and mothers who participate in monthly meetings and provide evaluative comments on the issues addressed.	Biannual	Report of meetings in schools, coming from the Departmental Delegations.	Report on the participation of mothers and fathers in the monthly meetings, where the evaluative comments on the topics addressed are collected.	Directorate of Educational Communities Liaisons
Socioemotional support strategy focused to students, parents and school staff includes information about the risks associated with gender in the situations that affect the emotional well-being	In the socioemotional support strategy's materials, information and/or sessions with students, parents and school staff (i.e. pedagogical advisors, counselors, directors, deputy directors and teachers) information is included about the risks that girls and young women face during different situations that affect their emotional well-being and the	Biannual	Guides and supportive materials for parents and families and school staff's online course and learning materials.	Brief report on how information about the risks associated with gender during emergencies is integrated in guides and supportive materials for parents and families and school staff's online course and learning materials.	Directorate Educational Communities Liaisons

	measures to mitigate them.				

ANNEX 1: Implementation Arrangements and Support Plan

Project Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

1. The activities of the Grant will be implemented by MINED in accordance with the current arrangements under the Project Alliance for Educational Quality (ACE - P161029). MINED will be responsible for the implementation of all the proposed activities through a Project Support Team (PST) composed of its existing organizational structure and line departments. The Vice Minister of Administrative Affairs of MINED will be the Project Coordinator (fully financed by the GoN). The Project Coordinator is supported by a Project Support Team that is responsible for the supervision of all Project activities, including quality control of documents sent to the Bank's no objection (e.g. Terms of Reference, Technical Specifications, Implementation Reports), as well ensuring the timely completion of Project activities. This Project Support Team is led by a Project Team Leader, who will be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and supervision activities financed by the grant, including the socio-environmental and fiduciary activities.

2. The Implementation of Project activities will be carried out by the relevant technical departments including, inter alia, the General Directorate for Primary Education (GDPE), the General Directorate for Secondary Education (GDSE), the General Directorate for Teacher Training (GDTT), the General Directorate for School Infrastructure (GDSI), and the General Directorate of Educational Planning and Programming (GDEPP). MINED will also coordinate and collaborate closely with its departmental and municipal delegations, depending on the areas prioritized by the Grant.

3. The Administrative and Financial General Division (Division General Administrativa Financiera, AFGD) will be responsible for FM, disbursement request preparation, Statements of Expenditures, audits, and so on, while the Procurement Division will handle Project procurement (preparation of bid documents, bid evaluation, contracts, and so on). The Project Coordinator will also have a critical capacity-building and training role within MINED to ensure that each of the various directorates deliver key inputs on time and in the correct format.

Procurement

4. A Project Procurement Strategy for Development (PPSD) is required as per the requirements of the World Bank's Procurement Framework. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as per paragraph 12, Section III of the World Bank Policy on IPF for Procurement in Situations of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, the approval of the final simplified PPSD has been deferred to the Project implementation phase. The PPSD is being prepared by MINED and will be sent to the Bank for No Objection. The Systematic Tracking of Exchanges in Procurement (STEP) will be used to plan, record, and track procurement transactions.

5. A virtual procurement capacity assessment of PST was conducted during Project preparation. The PST has had previous experience implementing Bank's Projects and the procurement staff is well capable and with experience to implement this Project. Procurement risks will be mitigated through the following measures: (i) exercise advance planning, comply with agreed timelines, and ensure that the PPSD as well as the procurement plan is based on current market conditions; (ii) verify the quality of equipment procured; and (iii) verification through post-delivery visits to all beneficiary facilities to ensure goods, works and services were used as intended. Notwithstanding these arrangements, procurement risks might be also incremented due to: (i)

scarcity due to COVID-19 commerce restrictions, including disruptions in the global supply chain; and (ii) potential delays in distribution due the pandemic and mobility restrictions that the country might have at the time of implementation.

Implementation Support Plan

Strategy and Approach for Implementation Support

6. This Implementation Support Plan has been developed based on lessons learned, the actual Project content, and its risk profile, aiming at making the implementation support to the GoN flexible and efficient. The plan places a strong emphasis on a close support and communication between the World Bank and MINED. Since 2012, through the supervision of recent and ongoing Projects, the World Bank has developed strong communication channels, a close relationship, and trust with teams at MINED, both at the central and subnational levels.

Implementation Support Plan and Resource Requirements

7. The World Bank will provide strong implementation support to the Project's Components, as well as guidance regarding technical, fiduciary, and social issues. The World Bank's support will be organized in (a) general supervision, (b) fiduciary and safeguards management support, (c) technical support in key areas.

   (i) **General supervision**. Project supervision will be carried out by the TTLs. The TTL or Co-TTLs will ensure that Project implementation is consistent with the World Bank requirements and as specified in the legal documents. It is expected that a fluid information exchange will be maintained with MINED senior officials, exploring trust and good communication.
   (ii) **Fiduciary management support**. Formal fiduciary supervision missions will be conducted at least once or twice per year throughout the Project's lifespan to (i) perform desk reviews of Project IFRs and audit reports, following up on any issues raised by auditors, as appropriate; (ii) assess the performance of control systems and arrangements; (iii) update the procurement and FM rating in the Implementation Support and Status Report as needed. Procurement post reviews are expected to take place on an annual basis.
   (iii) **Social and environmental Framework**. Supervision of the ESMF, the IPAP and the IPAPF will be carried out and supervised by the World Bank Social and Environmental Specialist assigned to the proposed Project, during semiannual supervision missions and on an on-demand basis. The supervision will require field visits.
   (iv) **Technical support**. The World Bank will provide technical support based on World Bank staff expertise and include: (a) one or two international experts on teacher policies; (b) an external school infrastructure expert; and (c) a monitoring and information systems expert to support the GoN in developing all the activities under Component 1. Experts will assist the TTLs to provide comments to MINED´s strategies and plans, as well as TOR and/or intermediate or final reports, as well as carry out the quality assurance of key products, as pre investment studies and the supervision of minor school infrastructure works to be carried out in addition to the provision of Mobile Digital Classrooms.

Table 1.1. Focus of Implementation Support

Time	Focus	Skills Needed	Resource Estimate (US)	Partner Role
First 12 months	Monitoring of implementation	Task Team Leader (TTL) Co-TTL	100,000	n.a
	Supervision and training in fiduciary and safeguard matters	Procurement, FM, and two Safeguards Specialists		n.a
	Development of instruments and training plan preparation	Teacher Training Specialist	25,000	n.a
	Selection of schools to be rehabilitated and supervision of technical document	Infrastructure Specialist	20,000	n.a
	Quality assurance in Components 1 and 2	Education Monitoring and Information Systems Specialist	5,000	n.a
12-18 months	Monitoring of implementation	Task Team Leader (TTL) Co-TTL	50,000	n.a
	Supervision and training in fiduciary and safeguard matters	Procurement, FM, and two Safeguards Specialists		n.a
	Technical support to teacher training programs	Teacher Training Specialist	6,250	n.a
	Supervision of works and quality assurance	Infrastructure Specialist	5,000	n.a

Table 2. Skills needed for project implementation

Skills Needed	Number of Staff Weeks (sw)	Number of Trips (per year)
TTL/Co-TTL	30	3-4
Procurement Spec	12	2
FM Spec	10	2
Environmental Safeguard Spec	4	1
Social Safeguard Spec	8	2
Economist	10	2
Analyst	8	2
Teacher Training Specialist	5	2
Infrastructure Specialist	10	2
Education Monitoring and Information Systems Specialist	4	1