



Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 24-Sep-2020 | Report No: PIDA30176

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Project Data**

Country Nicaragua	Project ID P174677	Project Name Nicaragua COVID-19 Education Sector Response	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	Estimated Appraisal Date 28-Sep-2020	Estimated Board Date 13-Nov-2020	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Republic of Nicaragua	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education (MINED)	

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.

Components

Supporting programs to reduce learning gaps for vulnerable groups in preschool, primary and secondary education
Support programs to develop socioemotional skills in vulnerable schools
Project Management

The processing of this project is applying the policy requirements exceptions for situations of urgent need of assistance or capacity constraints that are outlined in OP 10.00, paragraph 12.

Yes

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

Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Moderate

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

- Despite recent progress in poverty reduction, inequality remains a key development challenge for Nicaragua.** Pro-poor social spending in the last decade contributed to a reduction in both general and extreme poverty. Even with progress made, about 1.7 million Nicaraguans (approximately one-third of the population) still lived below the overall official poverty line in 2016. The bulk of the poor (approximately 71 percent) is, however, concentrated in rural areas and remote communities with constrained access to basic services.
- Nicaragua’s inequality levels are compounded by the country’s inherent vulnerability to natural disasters.** Nicaragua is highly vulnerable to hurricanes and storm surges in coastal areas, as well as to extreme precipitation and earthquakes. The country’s ability developed so far is still limited to withstand these climate and disaster risks. 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.
- The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak is expected to have further exacerbate these inequalities and vulnerabilities.** The pandemic led to job losses, a fall in consumer and business confidence, and a decline in labor intensive sectors, such as construction, commerce and services. According to the latest official forecasts, gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to contract by 4.5 percent in 2020. The unemployment rate, which was 6.8 percent in 2019 and particularly high among youth, is estimated to have increased, along with the size of the informal economy. The coronavirus spread has disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable populations.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

- Nicaragua faces a severe learning crisis that limits human capital formation and productivity.** According to the World Bank Human Capital Index, a child born in Nicaragua will be 53 percent as productive when he/she grows up as he/she could be if he/she enjoyed complete education and full health. Despite improvements in access and completion rates in basic education since 2008, learning poverty continues to undermine sustainable growth and poverty reduction with 70 percent of children aged 10 unable to read and understand short, age-appropriate texts.
- The COVID-19 pandemic threatens the country’s education progress, in great part due to the irregular school**



- attendance, 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. The COVID-19 pandemic impacts households and communities differently depending on their socioeconomic level and resilience; middle and high-income families may 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, limiting the learning of vulnerable children and youth without access to remote education given their lack of access to electronic devices and connectivity.
6. **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. 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 crises given their lack of necessary training, and the fact that they are experiencing elevated levels of stress and anxiety themselves.¹
 7. **Nicaragua's Ministry of Education (MINED) is making important efforts to cope with the crisis, but greater investment and coordinated efforts are needed to mitigate the impact on learning outcomes for 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. "Digital Classrooms" are being used to ensure access to digital technologies for students attending secondary public schools (with 100% of all schools equipped); however, rural primary schools lack the means to ensure learning continuity and recovery. Moreover, MINED implements several programs to promote the development of socioemotional skills among vulnerable groups under the leadership of the MINED's *Consejería 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.
 8. **To respond to the COVID-19 crisis in the medium and long-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 overlapping stages: *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 education 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 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.
 9. **The *National Strategy* is being supported by national resources, as well as national and international organizations that participated in the preparation of the MINED's response strategy and this proposed project.** Domestic

¹ World Bank. 2020. The COVID-19 Pandemic: Shocks to Education and Policy Responses. World Bank, Washington, DC.



resources are being devoted to the *National Strategy*, covering key areas like communication campaigns, teacher training, learning materials, hygiene materials, school management protocols, among others. In addition, multilateral institutions, such as UNICEF, the World Food Program, the Central American Bank, as well as bilateral cooperation such as the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and South Korea are supporting the *National Strategy* through ongoing projects. International and national non-governmental organizations are also aligning their projects to ensure synergies with MINED's initiatives. Finally, an education project managed by the World Bank Group is supporting the Government's response in basic education: The Alliance for the Quality of Education (ACE) Project (P161029), financed by the World Bank with a total amount of US\$ 55 million, focused on improving teacher practices and learning environments in basic education, ensuring water, sanitation and hygiene to rural schools to respond to the sanitary crisis. An ACE's Additional Financing (P167443), financed entirely by the Global Partnership for Education's Education Sector Plan Implementation Grant (US\$ 7.5M), is under preparation.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

10. 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.

Key Results

11. Project Development indicators are:

- (i) Children and youth belonging to vulnerable groups² that participate in programs to reduce learning gaps (disaggregated by gender) (number)
- (ii) Students who receive socioemotional support (disaggregated by gender) (number)

D. Project Description

12. **The activities under this Project aim to support MINED's National Strategy (Stages I to IV) to mitigate the impact of the crisis on vulnerable children and youth and, at the same time, to prepare for the recovery.** The Project will have an 18-month implementation period and will include two components:
13. **Component 1. Supporting programs to reduce learning gaps for vulnerable groups in preschool, primary and secondary education.** The activities under this component connect to work already underway by MINED and builds on already proven approaches by the Ministry.
14. Subcomponent 1.1. Supporting the implementation of a prioritized curriculum for vulnerable students. This subcomponent aims at supporting vulnerable students while schools are open; however, all materials developed would reach students nationwide if all schools transition to remote learning even if intermittently. The subcomponent will target students and teachers from vulnerable preschool, primary and secondary education schools without access to connectivity and electronic devices. The activities under this subcomponent build on initiatives MINED has already developed to respond to the pandemic, as well as technology-reinforced strategies to train teachers.

² 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.



- 15. 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. It will target multi-grade primary schools without access to connectivity and electronic devices but with the minimum conditions to adapt a Mobile Digital Classroom, plus regular primary schools that already have Mobile Digital Classrooms and connectivity. 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
- 16. **Component 2. Supporting programs to develop socioemotional skills in vulnerable schools.** 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. The support provided will be designed with a gender-perspective and will build on the existing MINED strategies and the contribution provided by the Local Group of Education (GLE), Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants (IP/AD), and the Cabinet of Persons with Disabilities. The component will target vulnerable preschool, primary, and secondary education schools who would be benefiting from interventions under subcomponent 1.1. The component is sub-divided into the following two subcomponents.
- 17. Subcomponent 2.1. Developing a socioemotional support strategy for school staff. This subcomponent aims at developing a strategy to provide socioemotional support to school’s 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.
- 18. 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.
- 19. **Component 3. Project Management.** This component 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.

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

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.



Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

E. Environmental and Social

20. **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.
21. **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.
22. **To support project preparation with condensed procedures under paragraph 12 of the Investment Project 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 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.
23. **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.



F. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

24. 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. The Vice Minister of Administrative Affairs of MINED will be the Project Coordinator.

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APPROVAL

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