

TC Document

I. Basic Information for TC

▪ Country/Region:	COLOMBIA
▪ TC Name:	Heal to Grow: Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health in Early Childhood
▪ TC Number:	CO-T1678
▪ Team Leader/Members:	Naslund-Hadley, Emma Ingrid (SCL/EDU) Team Leader; Maragall, Juan Ernesto (SCL/EDU) Alternate Team Leader; Blasco, Ivana (SCL/EDU); Emilio Laguillo (SCL/EDU); Greta Olivares (SCL/EDU); Natalia Almeida (LEG/SGO)
▪ Taxonomy:	Client Support
▪ Operation Supported by the TC:	n/a
▪ Date of TC Abstract authorization:	05 Apr 2022
▪ Beneficiary:	Colombia
▪ Executing Agency and contact name:	Inter-American Development Bank
▪ Donors providing funding:	OC SDP Window 2 - Social Development(W2E)
▪ IDB Funding Requested:	US\$250,000.00
▪ Local counterpart funding, if any:	US\$0
▪ Disbursement period (which includes Execution period):	36 months
▪ Required start date:	15 July 2022
▪ Types of consultants:	Individuals and firms
▪ Prepared by Unit:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ Unit of Disbursement Responsibility:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ TC included in Country Strategy (y/n):	Yes
▪ TC included in CPD (y/n):	No
▪ Alignment to the Update to the Institutional Strategy 2010-2020:	Social inclusion and equality

II. Objectives and Justification of the TC

- 2.1 It is imperative to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the mental health of students, caregivers, and teachers, and identify solutions to support young children. Against this background, the objective of the proposed TC is to evaluate the Heal to Grow (Sanar para Crecer) program to support the mental and emotional health of young children (3-5 years of age).
- 2.2 **Background.** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented changes that have profound implications in all spheres of lives and wellbeing across all communities, including children. Households throughout the world are suffering from the socio-economic impact of decreased or lost livelihoods, the loss of loved ones, and a decrease in social interactions which can all have a detrimental effect on mental health and well-being. For those involved in education, whether it be as students, teachers, or caregivers; the pandemic has been significantly challenging. The world changed overnight, and everyone was forced to adapt their learning environments and worry about each other's health and safety.
- 2.3 These quick changes to students' and families' daily lives took a toll on their mental health and well-being. A study by [Vaillancourt \(2021a\)](#) in the United States, shows that

parents had significantly worse mental health than other adults. Additionally, since the pandemic began, research has shown that teachers have shown an increase in psychological symptoms, such as stress, anxiety, and depression ([Ozamiz-Extebarria et al., 2021](#)). The well-being of caregivers and teachers can also affect the well-being and academic performance of students. An IDB regional survey, including Colombia and other countries in LAC, finds that the COVID-19 pandemic and associated social distancing measures have substantially affected the mental health and well-being of young children and their caregivers. A vast majority of caregivers (85%) reported at least one symptom of deteriorated mental health during the pandemic. Findings show troubling gender gaps in reported deterioration of mental health outcomes with mothers of young children being more affected by the pandemic than fathers, including gender gaps in sadness (26.1%), lack of appetite (27.7%), overall distress (20.1%), fear (16.3%), exhaustion (18.4%), and insomnia (15.9%). Child distress was found to increase in tandem with caregiver distress. Caregivers reported increased symptoms of distress during the pandemic, with 61% of children displaying at least one symptom of mental distress ([Näslund-Hadley et al, 2020](#)). In response to this mental health challenge of young children, the IDB has supported the development and testing of socio-emotional learning and mental wellbeing models for preschoolers. In Nicaragua, a caregiver application to foster socioemotional learning and mental health of young children has been developed and is being experimentally evaluated (NI-T1294). In El Salvador, the Tuchan model to support child development and socioemotional learning was designed and experimentally evaluated (ES-T1295, ES-T1282). In Guatemala, a behavioral intervention has been designed and evaluated (RG-T2838). In Colombia, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute ICBF¹ has tested an international model, Think Equal, for fostering socio-emotional skills (CO-T1524).

- 2.4 **Think Equal.** In response to the peacebuilding challenges facing Colombia, the Bank launched an intervention through its Early Childhood Development Innovation Fund to enhance the socio-emotional learning of 4 to 5-year-old Colombian children using a structured curriculum called “Think Equal.” This socioemotional learning program was developed in the United Kingdom to promote best practice quality education, inclusion, and equality in early childhood development and has been used around the world. In Colombia, the Bank worked in collaboration with Fundación Escuela Nueva and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, ICBF) to adapt and translate the curriculum to the Colombian context and implement it. The model was evaluated through an experimental evaluation (IPA, 2022) to assess its impact on children’s competencies in empathy, inclusion, compassion, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, emotional regulation, generosity, and advocating and caring for others. The experimental evaluation showed that the Think Equal program had positive effects on children’s prosocial behavior, emotional autoregulation, self-awareness, and cognitive learning. Treated children have higher cognitive development than their peers in the control group (0.15 standard deviations) and treated caregivers experience fewer negative emotions than controls (0.24 standard deviations). The program also improved mental health outcomes of caregivers (0.14 standard deviations) with effects being particularly elevated among caregivers with incomplete secondary education (0.22 standard deviations) (IPA, 2022).

¹ Colombian government agency in charge of the prevention and comprehensive protection of early childhood, childhood and adolescence, and families in the country.

- 2.5 **Heal to Grow.** Further to the pilot of Think Equal, the ICBF has designed and launched a program called Heal to Grow (Sanar para Crecer) which seeks to promote the wellbeing of children through the strengthening of the socioemotional skills of early childhood development (ECD) workers. These initiatives are part of a comprehensive development strategy of the ICBF's Early Childhood Division to foster wellbeing in children, families, and workers throughout the country. The program targets ECD workers through a nationwide network of the early childhood care and education service units. ECD services are early care settings under the responsibility of a trained person for children from 0 to 5 years of age, and pregnant women. All the ECD units under the ICBF serve about 1.7 million vulnerable children aged zero to five and pregnant women, and their families, nationwide. The ICBF has contracted a team of expert psychologists who will lead the implementation of Heal to Grow, including the training of some 1,400 ECD educators.
- 2.6 Based on extensive collaboration between the ICBF and the IDB in early childhood development over the past several years, the Government of Colombia has requested that the Bank assist with an experimental evaluation to assess the effect of the Heal to Grow Program on children's wellbeing. In addition to the Think Equal project described above, the ICBF and the Bank collaborated in the design and piloting of a model to combat the development of gender stereotypes in early childhood (RG-T3155) and included Colombia in the IDB regional survey on the impact on children's mental health of the COVID-19 pandemic mentioned above.
- 2.7 **Strategic Alignment.** The TC is consistent with the Second Update to the Institutional Strategy (UIS) 2020-2023 (AB-3190-2) and is strategically aligned with the recognition of social inclusion and equality as structural development challenges that influence cognitive and socioemotional skill development as it is expected the results will foster the development of children's socioemotional skills. The TC is similarly consistent with: (i) the Strategy on Social Policy for Equity and Productivity (GN-2588-4) as it is expected that the results will support the development of early childhood services and improvement in school quality; and (ii) the objectives of the Ordinary Capital Strategic Development Program Window 2 - Social Development (W2E) (GN-2819-14) as it is expected that the results will support human capital investment in early childhood. The TC is also aligned with the Skills Development Sector Framework Document (GN-3012-3), which promotes socioemotional skill development through home- and center-based interventions. The proposed TC contributes to the Corporate Results Framework (CRF) 2020-2023 (GN-2727-12) indicator number 2.1 "students benefitted by education projects (#)." The operation is also aligned with the IDB Country Strategy with Colombia 2018-2022 (GN-2972), which aims to improve the quality of education (Strategic Objective 1.2).

III. Description of activities/components and budget

- 3.1 **Component I: Experimental Evaluation of Heal to Grow (US\$235,000).** The aim of the Component is to evaluate the Heal to Grow Program. The TC will finance the contracting of a firm for the development of an evaluation design, randomizing ECD units. The experimental design will contrast any changes in wellbeing of children and ECD workers in the treatment group (Group I) with children and ECD workers from a group of comparison community households (Group II). The sample will tentatively consist of some 1,500 children. The evaluation seeks to answer research questions such as: Does learning about mindfulness and social emotional skills improve ECD educators' own skills? Are ECD educators gaining the necessary skills to transmit social emotional skill knowledge effectively to young children, pregnant women, and

families? Is mental health being strengthened through social emotional wellness? To answer these and other research questions, the evaluation will rely on administrative data and national survey data from the ICBF as well as the same instruments used to assess the Think Equal Program, as well as other socioemotional learning and socioemotional health programs (NI-T1294 and RG-T2838). These instruments measure wellbeing, quality-of-care practices, and the use of physical punishment in young children. Resources from the component will also be used to contract an individual consultant to assist with the data analysis and drafting of a paper.

- 3.2 Moreover, resources from the Component will be used to finance a comparative international study executed by the same firm contracted for the experimental evaluation contrasting the results from Heal to Grow with regional initiatives that aim to foster mental health and socioemotional learning (NI-T1294, ES-T1282, ES-T1295, RG-T2838 and CO-T1524).
- 3.3 **Component II: Dissemination (US\$15,000).** The TC will finance logistics related to the organization of a dissemination workshop in Colombia and a publication on the results from the Heal to Grow program. The workshops will take place once the evaluation of the Heal to Grow program has been completed, inviting representatives from the ECD community in Colombia.
- 3.4 **Indicative Budget:** The TC will have a total budget of \$250,000 which will be funded through the Ordinary Capital Strategic Development Program Window 2 - Social Development (W2E).

Indicative Budget (US\$)

Activity/Component	IDB/Fund Funding	Total Funding
Component I – Experimental Evaluation of Heal to Grow and regional comparative study	235,000.00	235,000.00
Experimental evaluation and regional study (firm)	200,000	200,000
Data analysis and drafting paper (individual consultant)	35,000	35,000
Component II – Dissemination	15,000.00	15,000.00
Editing and translation	4,000	4,000
Graphic design	5,000	5,000
Dissemination workshop	2,000	2,000
Video	4,000	4,000
Total	US\$250,000.00	US\$250,000.00

IV. Executing agency and execution structure

- 4.1 The TC will be executed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through the Education Division (SCL/EDU). The Government has requested that the Bank execute the TC based on its long experience in conducting experimental evaluations in early childhood education (see Annex). Moreover, the survey will contribute to a larger IDB survey on the mental health and wellbeing of children, caregivers, and teachers, which is regional in scope. The justification is consistent with 2.2(iii) of Appendix 10 of the Operational Guidelines for Technical Cooperation Products (as modified Annex 2 of GN-619-4) criteria for contracting by the Bank, which establishes that Bank execution

is justified when it helps ensure independence. In this case, the credibility of the evaluation of a government program is enhanced when conducted by an impartial entity.

- 4.2 As the executing agency of the TC, the Bank will be responsible for: (i) coordinating the actors involved in the activities of the initiative/project; (ii) identify the studies and technical work necessary to carry out the TC; (iii) select and contract consultants to provide the necessary services; (iv) supervise the consulting services to which the beneficiary provides technical inputs; and (v) manage the execution and provision of consulting services.
- 4.3 **Execution period.** The TC will have an execution and disbursement period of 36 months.
- 4.4 **Procurement.** The activities to be executed are included in the Procurement Plan (Annex) and the Bank will contract individual consultants, consulting firms and other services in accordance with current Bank procurement policies and procedures. The Bank will contract the services of individual consultants in accordance with Section AM-650 of the Administrative Manual “Complementary Workforce”, and consulting firms for services of intellectual nature in accordance with the Policy for the Selection and Contracting of Consulting Firms for Bank-Executed Operational Work (GN-2765-4) and its Operational Guidelines (OP-1155-4). For logistic services and other related services, the Corporate Procurement Policy (GN-2303-28) will apply.
- 4.5 **Single-source selection.** Direct contracting is foreseen of Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) in the amount of approximately US\$200,000 to undertake the experimental evaluation of the program and the comparative international study contrasting the results from Heal to Grow with regional initiatives that aim to foster mental health and socioemotional learning (Component I). IPA is qualified and considered an agency with exceptional worth for the assignment in accordance with 4.1.3(d) of the Policy for the Selection and Contracting of Consulting Firms for Bank-executed Operational Work (GN-2765-4). This non-governmental organization has completed over 300 experimental impact evaluations across the globe and has another 300 RCTs ongoing. Some 50 of these experimental evaluations are in the education sector. The single source selection is also in line with 4.1.3(a) of the same policy, which allows for the continuation of previous work carried out by the firm. Following a competitive bidding process, IPA successfully conducted the data collection and external evaluation related to ES-T1282 and ES-T1295, and evaluated also RG-T2838, NI-T1294, CO-T1524. This recommendation is based on the need to ensure comparability and continuity with the previous data collection and evaluation instruments.
- 4.6 **Monitoring.** The Project Team will be responsible for the review of all consultancy reports. The Team Leader will be responsible for continuous progress meetings with the counterparts and consultants.

V. Major issues

- 5.1 The unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic constitutes a challenge. Although many community households have reopened, it is uncertain if they will remain open. In response to this risk, the ICBF has a plan in place for the remote implementation of Heal to Grow. In addition, the execution of any pilot based on an experimental design presents logistical challenges. This is particularly true in rural communities that often have limited road infrastructure, where most schools are located in difficult terrain and

with extreme weather conditions. However, the IDB has many years of experience in working with schools in remote geographic areas. To mitigate risks associated to logistics, the project includes enough resources to ensure additional travel time when needed.

VI. Exceptions to Bank policy

- 6.1 There are no exceptions to Bank policy.

VII. Environmental and Social Strategy

- 7.1 This Technical Cooperation is not intended to finance pre-feasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects or environmental and social studies associated with them; therefore, this TC does not have applicable requirements of the Banks Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF).

Required Annexes:

[Request from the Client - CO-T1678](#)

[Results Matrix - CO-T1678](#)

[Terms of Reference - CO-T1678](#)

[Procurement Plan - CO-T1678](#)