



Project Information Document (PID)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 26-Mar-2020 | Report No: PIDA28005



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country Sao Tome and Principe	Project ID P169222	Project Name Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All Project	Parent Project ID (if any)
Region AFRICA	Estimated Appraisal Date 17-Apr-2020	Estimated Board Date 11-Jun-2020	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe	Implementing Agency Ministerio da Educacao e Ensino Superior	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to equip girls with life skills and improve student learning outcomes for all.

Components

- Empowering Girls through the Acquisition of Life Skills and a Safe School Environment
- Tackling the Learning Poverty
- Reaching the Most Vulnerable
- Technical Assistance, Project Coordination, Capacity Building and Monitoring and Evaluation
- Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC)

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	17.10
Total Financing	17.10
of which IBRD/IDA	15.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing



International Development Association (IDA)	15.00
IDA Grant	15.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	2.10
Education for All - Fast Track Initiative	2.10

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

1. **São Tomé and Príncipe (STP), located in the Gulf of Guinea, is a small low-middle-income country comprising two main islands.** It has a total population of approximately 200,000 people, 42.6 percent of whom are age 14 years or younger. In 2017, the country’s per capita gross domestic product (GDP) was US\$1,921. In addition to having a small population and a remote location, there is a high fixed cost of public goods—all factors that affect the country’s trade, fiscal accounts, and human development outcomes.

2. **From 2000 to 2010, the average annual GDP growth was 5 percent, though this contributed only slightly to a reduction in poverty.** STP experienced an economic upswing during the 2000s because of increasing capital and productivity growth. Growth rates began to decline, however, in 2011 from an average of 4.4 percent to an estimated 2.7 percent in 2018. This decline can be attributed to many factors, including a low level of domestic revenue mobilization and a reduction in government spending, given decreasing external grants and loans, which accounted for 95 percent of public investments in 2018. The 2017 Poverty Assessment (*Inquérito aos Orçamentos Familiares*, IOF) found that about two-thirds of the population was living in poverty and nearly one-half (or 47 percent) of the population was living in extreme poverty. Inequality has increased in recent years as evidenced by the Gini coefficient which increased from 30.8 in 2010 to 56.3 in 2017. The unemployment rate was 9.1 percent in 2017 and the majority (68.7 percent) of the population was working in the informal sector. The IOF also found that 31 percent of the



country's labor force was employed in the tertiary sector while 14.2 percent were working in agriculture and/or fisheries.

3. **An outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been spreading rapidly across the world since December 2019.** Since the beginning of March 2020, the number of cases outside China has increased thirteenfold and the number of affected countries has tripled. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic as the coronavirus rapidly spreads across the world. **As of March 24, 2020, the outbreak has resulted in an estimated 334,981 cases and 14,652 deaths in 189 countries.** On March 19th, 2020, in anticipation of a COVID-19 outbreak, the Government announced school closures. It is expected that healthcare services will also be severely disrupted in the coming months.

4. **Human development outcomes in STP are low.** Trends since 2010 showed slight improvements, though school closings and a healthcare system likely to be overrun due to COVID-19 will likely roll back those gains. STP's United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index (HDI) value has increased from 0.542 to 0.589 between 2010 and 2017, placing it above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (0.537), but below the average for countries in the medium human development level group (0.645). Strong gains in the country's HDI are largely attributable to an increase in average life expectancy, a reduction in infant mortality, and an increase in the average years of schooling. From 2010 to 2017, life expectancy at birth has increased from 65.9 years to 66.8 years, the infant mortality rate has decreased from 33.5 to 25.2 (out of 1,000 live births), and the expected years of schooling and the mean years of schooling have increased from 10.6 to 12.5 and from 4.9 to 6.3, respectively.¹

5. **Improvements in human development outcomes are limited due to gender inequalities.** Women are less likely to enter the labor market due to fewer work opportunities and a skills mismatch between those they possess and those needed by the labor market. The unemployment rate among women is three times higher than that of men (14.5 percent compared to 5 percent) (IOF 2017). These disparities start in adolescence, where pregnant girls face significant challenges to staying in and completing secondary school, including an institutionalized policy for pregnant girls to attend night classes. One-third of women, ages 15–26 years, report not going to school because they had a child or became pregnant (IOF 2017). Adolescent mothers are more likely to die at childbirth and have children who are lower birth weight when born, more likely to be stunted due to lack of nutrition, and in turn, be at a disadvantage from the very early years of their life.

B. Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. **The structure of the country's pre-tertiary education sector was modified by the 2018 National Education System Law which mandates 11 years of compulsory education (comprising two years of pre-school and nine years of basic education) divided into three cycles.** Some of the changes introduced under the 2018 law included: (i) a transfer of the responsibility of daycare responsibilities (for children ages 0-3) from the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação e Ensino Superior* – MEES) to the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family and Vocational Training (*Ministerio do Trabalho, Solidariedade, Família e Formação Profissional* - MTSFFP); and (ii) the reclassification of lower secondary education as the third cycle of basic education, limiting secondary education to grades 10 to 12. The current education system

¹ STP is not yet included in the Human Capital Index of the World Bank because it does not have internationally comparable data on learning outcomes.



includes (a) two years of preschool (ages 4–5 years); (b) nine years of basic education divided into three cycles (grades 1 to 4 [ages 6–9 years], grades 5 to 6 [ages 10–11 years], and grades 7 to 9 [ages 12–14 years]); and (c) three years of secondary education (grades 10 to 12 [ages 15–17 years]).

7. The education system has seen positive trends in access for both boys and girls in recent years.

Table 1 provides an overview of student enrollment from preschool through secondary education and teacher qualifications in STP. Overall, these numbers represent a positive trend of keeping more children in school longer.

Table 1. Number of Schools, Teachers, and Students 2018/2019

	Preschool		Basic education (first and second cycles)		Basic education (third cycle)		Secondary education	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Schools	114		95		31		19	
Public	91	80	90	95	29	94	17	89
Private	23	20	5	5	2	6	2	11
Students	11752	16	38781	52	15754	21	7728	10
Male	5756	49	20036	52	7592	48	3517	46
Female	5996	51	18745	48	8162	52	4211	54
Public	10850	92	38210	99	15362	98	7411	96
Private	902	8	571	1	392	2	317	4
Teachers*	655		1231		774		360	
Male	39	6	546	44	488	63	247	69
Female	616	94	685	56	286	37	113	31
Education degree	14	2	411	33	269	35	191	53
Non-education degree	180	27	106	9	191	25	140	39
No degree	461	70	714	58	314	41	29	8

Source: STP Statistical Annual Report 2018/2019.

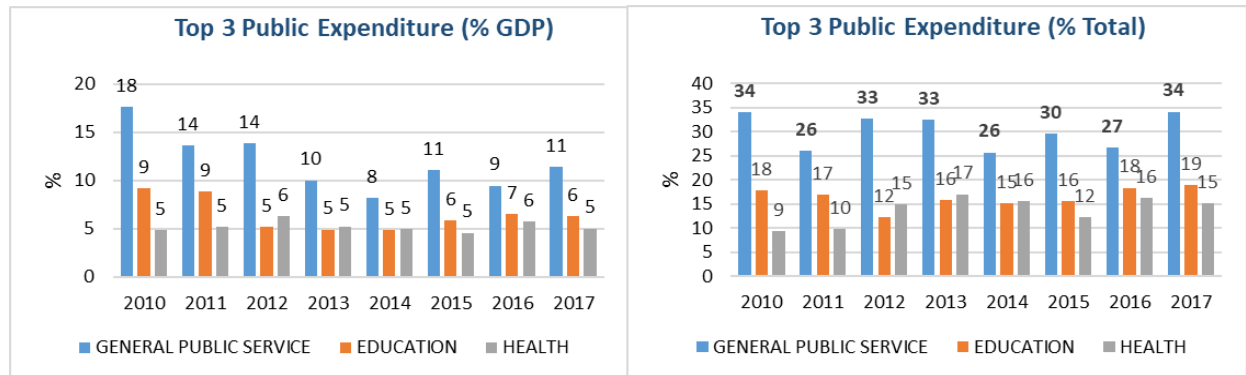
Notes: * Teacher qualification in secondary education is included in the third cycle of basic education. Education degree = certified teachers; non-education degree = teachers with tertiary education but not in a field of education (engineers, lawyers, nurses, and so on); no degree = teachers without a tertiary education degree.

8. Most basic and secondary schools in STP are public. In 2019, of the 114 preschools 91 (or 80 percent) were public and of the 95 schools providing the first and second cycles of basic education 90 (or 95 percent) were public. Of the 31 schools providing the third cycle of basic education, only 2 were private and of the 19 secondary education schools only 2 were private. The percentages are similar in terms of student numbers – with only 5 percent of students across these levels being enrolled in private schools.

9. Public expenditure on the education sector was 6 percent of GDP in 2017 – accounting for 19 percent of total public expenditure (see Figure 1). The expenditure per GDP in education in STP is above the average for SSA but, in terms of share of total public expenditure, is aligned with the SSA average. In 2017, recurrent expenditures accounted for about 80 percent of overall public spending on education, of which approximately 70 percent was on staff salaries. The expenditure on teachers’ salaries constituted the largest share of the wage bill of the public service, accounting for 40 percent in 2017.



Figure 1. Public Expenditure on the main sectors (% of GDP and % Total Public Expenditure)



Source: STP Boost data.

10. STP’s school-age children are facing three main issues: (a) girls' education outcomes are constrained by high rates of early pregnancy, among other factors; (b) learning levels in STP are low for boys and girls, due to system-wide weaknesses; and (c) vulnerable children in and out of schools are not supported in their efforts to reach their full human potential. Each is summarized below.

Issue 1. Girls' retention and completion are constrained by high rates of early pregnancy, among other factors

11. Although there are no gender disparities in access, performance, or retention rates at any level, girls in STP face several challenges in completing their education including adolescent pregnancy which is cited as the key reason for girls’ decision to drop out (IOF 2017) of school. While the overall fertility rate has declined in recent years, it remains high among adolescent girls (96 births per 1,000 women ages 15–19 years). In terms of policy, however, the internal disciplinary regulation (*Regulamento Disciplinar para o 2o. Ciclo do Ensino Básico, Ensino Secundário e para Ensino Profissional*) of the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação e Ensino Superior, MEES*), prohibits pregnant girls from continuing their studies in the regular education system after the first trimester of pregnancy, leading 86 percent of pregnant adolescent girls to drop out of school.

12. Other barriers that girls face in enrolling in and staying in school are long distances to school, safety concerns, poor sanitation/lack of facilities, and limited value attached to girls’ education. Girls are at an increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV) including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), for example, as a result of the prevalent and widely accepted practice of sex-for-grades. Most schools have limited sanitation/toilets and provide little if any support for menstrual hygiene management (MHM), preventing consistent school attendance. Finally, accepted social and cultural norms place limited value on girls’ education and their future economic independence.

13. Relatedly, access to contraception and knowledge of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is limited. One-third of women who seek to space or limit their childbearing report not having access to



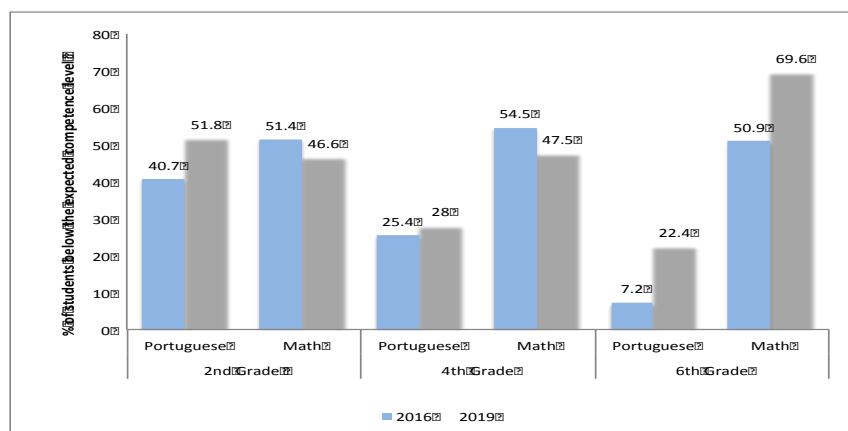
contraception. A minority (40 percent) of young people (ages 15–24 years) were able to correctly identify options for avoiding the transmission of HIV and myths about HIV (UNICEF 2016)².

Issue 2. Learning outcomes are low for boys and girls, due to system-wide weaknesses

14. **Since achieving universal basic education in 2010, the past decade has seen education coverage at the preprimary and third cycle of basic education expand massively.** According to the 2018 education sector analysis (ESA), enrollment at all levels of education has increased, especially in preschool, the third cycle of basic education, and at the secondary level. Between 2007 and 2017, the preprimary gross enrollment rate (GER) more than tripled from 21.4 percent to 71.4 percent. For the third cycle of basic education, the GER increased from 68 percent to 114 percent, while at the secondary level the GER increased from 20.3 percent to 62.6 percent, representing an annual growth rate of 19.2 percent. The enrollment rates by gender and type of school (public and private) are presented in table 1.

15. **Despite these gains, learning outcomes are low, with important geographic disparities.** The 2016 Large-scale Assessment of Basic Education (*Avaliação Aferida de Larga Escala no Ensino Básico*, AALEB), supported under the recently closed World Bank and Global Partnership for Education (GPE)-financed STP - Quality Education for All (QEFA) Project (P146877) found that 51 percent of grade 2 students did not have the minimum competencies in mathematics required for that grade. Figure 2 shows the percentage of students in grades 2, 4, and 6 below the expected competency levels in both 2016 and 2019. According to the findings of the 2019 Large-Scale Assessment of Secondary Education (*Avaliação Aferida de Larga Escala no Ensino Secundário*, AALES) supported by the Portuguese Cooperation, 95 percent of grade 9 and 12 students did not have basic competencies in Portuguese and mathematics. Results from the 2017 National Certificate Exam (*Exame Nacional*, NCE) showed that 36 percent of grade 9 and 49 percent of grade 12 students were repeaters (taking the exam for another time) indicating that a large portion of students do not pass the exam the first time. Figure 3 shows the average percentage of level of achievement of students in grades 2, 4, and 6 by rural/urban status.

Figure 2. Proportion of Grade 2, 4, and 6 Students Below the Expected Competency Levels in Portuguese and Mathematics (2016 and 2019)

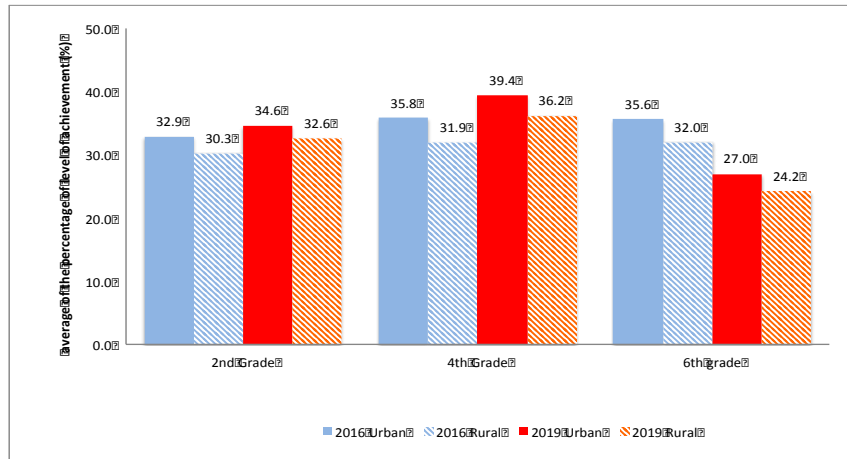


³ The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recommended standards of student per toilet at schools are 25 girls and one for female staff; one toilet plus one urinal (or 50 cm of urinal wall) per 50 boys, and one for male staff.



Source: STP AALEB 2016 and 2019 reports.

Figure 3. Average Level of Achievement in Grades 2, 4, and 6



Source: STP AALEB 2016 and 2019 reports.

16. **There are multiple systemic factors contributing to low learning outcomes.** These factors include (a) ineffective teacher management, resulting in a low-quality teaching force; (b) poor learning conditions in schools; (c) ineffective school leadership and lack of accountability for learning at the school level; (d) limited assessment and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems; and (e) a lack of adequate and sustainable financing. It is expected that COVID-19 will further exacerbated these constraints to learning, as schools close, and students are left at home with few options for pursuing their learning. Each of these is further summarized in the following paragraphs.

- (a) **Ineffective policies for teacher management, resulting in poor quality teachers.** Policies for teacher management are largely absent, especially with regards to recruitment and deployment. Hiring of teachers is undertaken largely on an ad hoc basis with little consideration for their efficient allocation. Although a new teachers’ certification process is underway, it has not yet been implemented, resulting in recruitment practices that are neither merit-based nor guided by an objective assessment of pedagogical skills or competencies. To fill gaps, the Government hires temporary teachers to address overcrowding (driven in part by high repetition rates) without validating their qualifications or ensuring that they meet basic minimum standards. Additionally, there is no induction program for newly hired teachers nor a probationary period before teachers are tenured. The Government uses a single salary pay scale for teachers based on experience, degrees, and working conditions (class size and location) with no extra incentives provided to encourage teachers to teach effectively and to work in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Consequently, only 21 percent of qualified teachers are working in rural areas. Further, because only those teachers at the secondary level receive additional payments for larger classes, teachers have an incentive to leave basic education, further reducing the number of qualified teachers at that level.



- (b) **Poor learning conditions.** Most schools are characterized by overcrowding and have dilapidated classrooms, and limited equipment and materials for students and teachers. Although the average classroom size is 39 students (preschool) and 64 students (basic), there is a significant variation by region. At the preschool level, the classroom size ranges from 18 students in the Autonomous Region of Príncipe (*Região Autónoma do Príncipe*, RAP) to 70 students in Agua Grande. In basic education, the classroom size ranges from 42 students in Caue to 75 in Agua Grande. Access to toilets is also limited with one toilet for 98 students at the preschool level and 177 students per toilet in basic education.³ In addition, although relatively few schools in the country are without electricity (14 percent) and without water (7 percent), these proportions reach 46 percent in the district of Lobata and 20 percent in the district of Cantagalo.
- (c) With regard to teaching and learning materials (TLMs), most are outdated and the availability of textbooks is limited. Textbooks also are not free, with most students being unable to purchase them or cover the cost of photocopying them. Moreover, the Ministry does not have a well-defined or financially sustainable textbook procurement and management system; textbooks often reinforce pervasive gender stereotypes that undervalue girls' and women's contributions to broader society. Finally, there are few opportunities for teachers and students to use digital technology which would both increasing their access to TLMs and also facilitate the acquisition of digital skills among teachers and students.
- (d) **Ineffective school leadership and lack of accountability for learning at the school level.** Selection of school management staff including principals is usually based on political appointment. As a result, a large portion have no experience in the education sector and there is a high degree of turnover among them. The principals are also not held accountable for school management and performance and, in turn, their supervision is also inadequate resulting in suboptimal teaching and learning practices. Although there is a central school supervision system, it requires strengthening. At the school level, for example, principals do not oversee teachers' time on task, or otherwise hold teachers accountable for their performance. The ESA found that approximately 44 percent of the third cycle basic education and more than half of secondary school teachers teach less than 14 hours per week, 70 percent of what they are expected to be teaching.
- (e) **Limited assessments and use of data to guide decision making.** Data from the national student learning assessment are not systematically used to improve teaching and guide decision making. While a national assessment system has recently been established, further work is needed to strengthen its ability to provide timely feedback and use the data to guide teaching and other decision-making in the sector. Currently, there are limited links between students' learning outcomes and teachers' performance and the assessment system is unable to identify low-performing teachers. Finally, STP does not participate in any international assessments, which impedes any efforts to benchmark performance against

³ The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF recommended standards of student per toilet at schools are 25 girls and one for female staff; one toilet plus one urinal (or 50 cm of urinal wall) per 50 boys, and one for male staff. J. Adams et al., W. (2009). Sanitation and Hygiene Standards for Schools in Low-cost Settings, (Geneva; WHO, 2009).



established international standards. While an Education Management Information System (EMIS) was recently developed, additional efforts are needed to enable this system to provide data to guide real-time decision making. Also, greater quality control to ensure data accuracy is required and measures to mitigate the absence of electricity and Internet connectivity are not available.

- (f) **Lack of adequate, sustainable financing.** Because the Government is facing low levels of domestic revenues and reductions of external funds, the lack of sustainable financing for the education sector hampers the continuation of programs developed in collaboration with development partners (DPs) and the increase in the coverage. Teachers' salaries represent the greatest proportion of the education budget (74 percent), followed by subsidies and transfers for tertiary education (20 percent). Of the spending on teachers' salaries, 45 percent is used to cover the cost of overtime for teachers who teach in a different school or who teach in crowded classrooms (50 students or more) at the secondary level. This leaves limited discretionary resources available for investments in those inputs which will lead to improvements in education quality, increases in access and retention, and guarantee of continuation of basic educational programs. Even though the government continues to charge fees (including for registration, school feeding, and school uniforms, etc.), services are not necessarily provided. For instance, in December 2018, the school feeding program was discontinued in most schools because of lack of funds – although fees were still charged.

Issue 3. Vulnerable children in and out of school are not supported to reach their full human potential

17. **High repetition rates and overage enrollment plague the system, causing inefficiencies and overcrowding and leading to dropouts.** Repetition is high at all levels of education and is higher than the average found in other Sub-Saharan African countries. In 2017, 14 percent of STP students enrolled in basic education were repeaters. This is much higher than the average repetition rate in Sub-Saharan Africa of 9.9 percent (first and second cycles) and 13 percent (third cycle). The percentage of repeaters is significantly higher in grade 2 (23 percent), grade 4 (17 percent), and grade 6 (15 percent), when the NCE is mandatory and determines promotion to the next grade level. The practice of holding children back is even more common at the secondary level (as estimated 25 percent of children are held back each year), driving high dropout rates. Teachers have the autonomy of deciding whether to retain a student in the same grade or to promote him/her to the next grade. Often, teachers weigh nonacademic factors more heavily than academic performance (for example, disruptive behavior, lack of attention, and gender discrimination). The high repetition rates, combined with late entry of students, results in high rates of age/grade distortion; approximately 48 percent of students in grade 4 and 70 percent in grade 6 are overage for their grade.

18. **These internal inefficiencies result in low completion rates at the secondary level.** Once out of school, youth, especially pregnant girls, have few opportunities to acquire skills that will serve them in work and life. Completion rates at the secondary level are only 39.7 percent for girls and 28.9 percent for boys. The overall secondary completion rate decreased from 40.5 percent in 2017 to 34.3 percent in 2019.

19. **In response to the above summarized challenges, the Government has developed a comprehensive Education Sector Plan (*Carta de Política Educativa, ESP*) (2019–2023), based on findings of the 2018 ESA, funded by the GPE.** The ESP was endorsed by the Government and the Local Education



Group (LEG) in November 2019. The ESP is the result of a participatory and inclusive development process that reflects the changes introduced in the 2018 National Education System Law and represents the vision of the Government, DPs, and civil society for the sector for the next four years. The ESP priorities are to address the learning crisis facing all levels of education and improve the efficiency and equality of the country's education system. The MEES has also prepared a COVID-19 response strategy to introduce emergency measures in the short-term, such as school closings, and protocols for deep cleaning of schools prior to the return of students.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

20. **The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to equip girls with life skills and improve student learning outcomes for all.**

PDO-Level Indicators

21. Progress toward achievement of the PDO would be measured by the following indicators:

- (a) Percentage of girls benefiting from the acquisition of life skills among targeted girls;⁴
- (b) Percentage of grade 2 students who have grade-level competencies in literacy;
- (c) Percentage of grade 2 students who have grade-level competencies in numeracy; and
- (d) Repetition rate in basic and secondary education (disaggregated by gender).

22. PDO-level indicators are aligned with the two GPE pillars of learning (indicator 2) and efficiency (indicator 3). The Results Framework includes the abovementioned PDO-level indicators and several intermediate results indicators (see section VII. Results Framework and Monitoring). The Results Chain can be found in section II. E.

D. Project Description

23. **The proposed Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All Project seeks to empower girls⁵ and tackle learning poverty in São Tomé and Príncipe (STP), especially among the most vulnerable.** Boosting shared prosperity in STP requires increased human capital, currently constrained by low levels of learning and poor labor market outcomes for women. In 2017, women were three times more likely to be unemployed than men, reflecting a gender gap that starts in adolescence. Further, one-third of girls,

⁴ The life skills that will be prioritized for girls' empowerment are those that raise aspirations and foster agency to take control over life choices, such as financial literacy, knowledge about SRH, and negotiation skills.

⁵ In this context, empowerment means improving the ability of girls and women to make strategic life choices (Malhotra et al 2009), by boosting the status of women through literacy, education, training, and raising awareness (Alvarez and Lopez 2013). The references are: (a) Malhotra et al., 2009. Innovation for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). North Washington, D.C; (b) Alvarez and Lopez, 2013. From unheard screams to powerful voices: a case study of Women's political empowerment in the Philippines. In: 12th National Convention on Statistics (NCS) EDSA Shangri-la Hotel, Mandaluyong City October 1 e 2, 2013.



ages 15–26 years, reported being unable to complete their studies due to becoming pregnant or early motherhood. At the same time, learning outcomes for both girls and boys are low, with 50 percent of grade 2 students and 70 percent of grade 6 students not acquiring basic competencies in math. The project will help address these key challenges by:

- (a) **Equipping girls with the confidence, knowledge, and negotiation skills (among other life skills)** that will raise aspirations and foster agency to take control over life choices, through activities such as mentoring and girls clubs;
- (b) **Providing safe learning spaces**, including implementing plans to combat school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) and infrastructure for water, sanitation, and ensuring adequate hygiene (WASH) known to boost school attendance and be conducive to girls practicing good MHM;
- (c) **Working with families and communities** such that empowered girls are supported in the context of traditional gender and social norms;
- (d) **Tackling learning poverty**, through activities at the student, teacher, school, and system levels to promote school readiness in preschool, effective literacy and numeracy teaching, and school leadership and accountability.; and
- (e) **Reaching the most vulnerable children**, both in school and out of school. Children in school in need of special support will be identified through an early warning system and accompanied by corresponding remedial tutoring to accelerate learning. Out-of-school youth would be connected to second chance learning opportunities and skills development programs.

24. **These interventions, to be co-financed by IDA and GPE, are aligned with the Government’s ESP and related strategies.** The project’s design also draws on lessons learned from previous and ongoing World Bank and DPs’ support to education in STP. Overall, the project aims to empower girls and tackle learning poverty by supporting the girls in acquisition of life skills and undertake system-wide activities to tackle poor learning outcomes, with the focus on the most vulnerable.

25. The proposed project is comprised of five components, which together aim to empower girls, and tackle learning poverty by supporting the acquisition of life skills for girls and system-wide activities to tackle poor learning outcomes. The project also aims to support a more inclusive and conducive learning environment for girls and the most vulnerable. The scope of the project is general education (covering preschool through secondary education), but each component focuses on different levels of education to achieve the development objectives as described in the following paragraphs.⁶ The project’s fifth component is a Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC), allowing for rapid reallocation of project proceeds in the event of a natural or artificial disaster or crisis that has caused or is likely to imminently cause a major adverse economic and/or social impact.

⁶ Components 1 and 2 focus on improving the quality of preschool and basic education while Component 3 focuses on improving access and retention in basic and secondary education.



Component 1: Empowering Girls through the Acquisition of Life Skills and the Promotion of a Safe School Environment (US\$5.65 million equivalent)

26. This component aims at imparting life skills and strengthening SRH education through girls' and boys' clubs and community outreach strategies. The component will also support the sustainable provision of safe and sanitary spaces, water supply, and MHM in schools through school-based WASH interventions. Integral to safer school environments are those activities that strive to make schools free of sexual harassment and SEA in all its forms. The key objective is to foster behavioral changes of educators, and boys and girls in the third cycle of basic education and secondary education to ensure the empowerment of girls.

Subcomponent 1.1: Imparting life skills and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education (US\$0.6 million equivalent)

27. The subcomponent will support the following activities at 63 targeted schools with students in grades 7 to 12:

- (a) Establishment of girls' and boys' clubs programs tailored to each context with the objective to protect girls at risk of early pregnancy; prevent pregnant girls from lagging behind, GBV, and dropping out; and to promote positive masculinity;
- (b) Strengthening of the existing SRH education program with gender-sensitive TLMs and ensuring that teacher training plans include SRH and gender-sensitive instructions, such as boys' and girls' socioemotional skills, girls' aspirations and empowerment, GBV, and positive masculinity; and
- (c) Community outreach strategies to raise awareness among the school community about the value of education for all, with an emphasis on girls, through behavior change campaigns, students' vocational fairs, and identifying female role models.

28. The establishment of girls' and boys' clubs will be supported to improve study skills, prevent adolescent childbearing, and increase the likelihood of pregnant girls being successful in school. The girls' and boys' clubs will be overseen by a well-trained female (or male) guidance counselor who will also serve as a key focal point at schools to whom students can raise any particular concerns related to SRGBV or incidents that they might experience or witness. The girls' and boys' clubs will also be sensitized to unacceptable behaviors and how to seek help and report incidents.⁷ The SRH programs and teacher training will draw on good practices in other settings to ensure that training provided and related TLMs

⁷ The design of the girls and boys club intervention in STP will draw from the lessons learned in Uganda project 'Supporting Children's Opportunities through Protection and Empowerment' (SCOPE) (P161704).



are gender sensitive and promote girls' empowerment. At the community level, awareness-raising campaigns will be supported to strengthen the local community's engagement in promoting girls' education and addressing gender discriminatory social norms and stereotypes.

Subcomponent 1.2: Fostering safer schools' environments (US\$5.0 million equivalent)

29. This subcomponent aims to make the school environment safer and more attractive to students, in order to promote girls' and boys' well-being and corresponding desire to attend school. One activity which will be supported is a WASH program in 40 schools to ensure separate, clean, and safe facilities for girls and boys. The integrated approach to WASH aims to reduce the prevalence of water-related diseases, among the student and school community, and to reduce female absenteeism in schools. This will entail support to: (a) the design and construction of bathrooms with adequate sanitation and water supply systems including separate facilities for girls and boys;⁸ (b) institutional maintenance and oversight—providing support to the Government to institutionalize systematic cleaning and maintenance; and (c) resupplying (toilet paper, soap, menstrual hygiene products, and so on) school bathrooms in an efficient manner.⁹ Activities could also include those relating to deep-cleaning of schools in order to prepare them for the return of students once schools reopen. Finally, the project will support hygiene training and behavior change among project beneficiaries and awareness for students and families, including MHM, handwashing behaviors, menstrual social acceptance, and ensuring a respectful and safe environment. The Project Operations Manual (POM) will describe the WASH program supported under the proposed project in further detail.

30. This subcomponent would also support some interventions to make schools safer in terms of child protection, sexual harassment and SEA, as part of the Ministry's unambiguous zero-tolerance approach to SRGBV. The key activities are: (a) design and implementation of a Code of Conduct for teachers and other education personnel; (b) GBV awareness intervention(s); and (c) a coaching program to prevent GBV. The code of conduct for teachers and other education personnel, which will delineate roles and responsibilities of all actors at the school level and in the education management chain. This will include key definitions of specific types of prevalent SRGBV, and expected conduct towards GBV and child protection, dedicated mechanisms for reporting, addressing, monitoring and sanctioning cases of abuse will be introduced.

Component 2: Tackling Learning Poverty (US\$7.97 million equivalent)

31. The objective of this component is to tackle learning poverty in STP by: (i) increasing school readiness in preschool; (ii) promoting effective teaching of literacy and numeracy in grades 1–6; (iii)

⁸ Specifically, this means that the project will rehabilitate and/or build bathrooms in schools to ensure efficient functionality, safety, and privacy following best WASH practices in schools (separation of washrooms for boys and girls, light requirements, space distributions, handwashing facilities, facilities for handicapped students, menstrual hygiene facilities, and so on). This activity will also include maximizing school connections to water supply systems, by rehabilitating or building access/connections in selected schools.

⁹ This will also include interventions to improve sanitation conditions following principles of city-wide inclusive sanitation, selecting adapted solutions based on the context of each school (septic tanks, sewage connections, fecal sludge management, and so on). This dimension will consider budgeting issues and interrelationships between schools and national agencies (also, linked to medical care, pain management, and counseling).



improving the country's teacher management system; and (iv) promoting school leadership and accountability.¹⁰ To achieve these objectives, this component will adapt a multipronged approach to boost students' performance in Portuguese and mathematics in the early grades of basic education, focusing largely on interventions which target/support low-performing teachers, improve the prestige of the teaching profession, and hold teachers and principals accountable for student performance.

Subcomponent 2.1: Teacher professional development and provision of TLMs (US\$4.88 million equivalent)

32. This subcomponent aims to improve teaching practices and student learning outcomes in preschool and the first and second cycles of basic education by upgrading STP's teacher professional development program. Building on the lessons learned under the QEFA Project, it will support further upgrading of the distance learning program for both preschool and basic education school teachers in collaboration with other development partners (including United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] and the Portuguese Cooperation). For preschool teachers, the proposed project will support the upgrade and rollout of a distance learning program including relevant teaching materials (teachers' scripted manuals with the new curriculum guidelines).¹¹ This in-service teacher training will benefit all of the 655 preschool teachers in STP. For basic education teachers, the proposed project will support the development of structured pedagogical and coaching programs and teaching materials (for example, lesson plans, printed and for tablets) to teach basic skills in literacy and numeracy. These structured pedagogical and coaching programs will be focused on a set of key principles with the overall goal of improving teacher-student interactions in the classroom. The pedagogical and coaching programs will be tailored, focused, practical, easy to understand, and continuous. Approximately 1,800 teachers in grades 1 to 6 are expected to benefit from this intervention.

33. This subcomponent will also support the provision of TLMs associated with the structured pedagogical teachers' training in preschool and basic education. Specifically, the project will provide play and learning materials for preschool children and supplementary learning materials for students in grades 1 to 6, such as student manuals and workbooks. It will also promote training and use of digital technologies, such as energized books, tablets, and educational software, in a sample of 31 third cycle basic education schools and all 19 secondary education schools to improve the digital skills of teachers and students. In line with the broader gender lens of the project, these materials will integrate and reinforce the strong roles that women and girls can play in the broader society.

34. The project will explore the use of technology to overcome the country's capacity and structural constraints, such as electricity shortage and limited connectivity, and promote more exposure to digital content and the development of digital skills for teachers and students. For example, some strategies that might be used are solar-powered tablets and software that can be used off-line.

Subcomponent 2.2: Strengthening teacher management and school leadership (US\$0.91 million equivalent)

¹⁰ Learning poverty measure refers to children being unable to read and understand simple text by age 10. STP was not able to have a learning poverty measure because of the lack of international student assessment data.

¹¹ The STP preschool curriculum guidelines were developed with the support of UNICEF in 2018.



35. This subcomponent will prepare the groundwork in basic education schools (grades 1–9) for holding teachers, principals, and supervisors accountable for students' performance. The first objective of this subcomponent is to strengthen policies for better teacher management and accountability. Specifically, under this subcomponent, the proposed project will support the design and implementation of merit- and need-based teacher recruitment and deployment policies. It also seeks to strengthen the capacity of the MEES to monitor and evaluate teacher performance and practices. In the area of teacher management, this would include: (a) revising the MEES human resource policies to define Standards for teachers, implementing entry and qualification requirements (certification), and designing educators' career structure; and (b) developing a nonmonetary reward program for basic education teachers based on the outcomes of the classroom observations and student learning assessments, developed under Subcomponent 2.1, and progress in reducing repetition. Together, these activities aim to hold teachers accountable for the quality of teaching in the classroom and the achievements of students in preschool, basic, and secondary schools.

36. The second objective of this subcomponent is to strengthen school leadership, governance, and management. Under this subcomponent, the proposed project will support: (a) the development and implementation of a professional leadership training program for school principals for basic education; (b) the design and implementation of a policy governing the meritocratic recruitment and deployment of basic school principals; and (c) the establishment of school management committees (SMCs) for effective participatory school management and improved accountability. The alignment of the recruitment, deployment, and training processes of principals aims at identifying and certifying school principals with competencies in school management. The certified school principals will be responsible for school management, providing pedagogical support to teachers, and student learning outcomes—these will be detailed in the school principal's results agreement. The SMCs will provide oversight in schools to ensure the achievement of results, accomplishment of requirements, and the active participation of the school community. The project will provide training to school stakeholders and support efforts to strengthen school leadership, governance, and management.

37. In line with efforts to address SRGBV, a coaching program will also integrate modules on preventing SEA and sexual harassment for teachers, school directors, and inspectors. Furthermore, the project will ensure that well-trained female (or male) guidance counselors will support the schools to serve as entry points for any complaints, and to assist with ongoing sensitization to the school community.

Subcomponent 2.3: Classroom observation and Learning assessment systems (US\$2.18 million equivalent)

38. The objectives of this subcomponent are to develop classroom observation and strengthen the learning assessment systems of basic education schools (grades 1–9). The upgrading and strengthening of a national assessment strategy will be developed as a tool to improve teaching and education policy decision making. The key activities of this subcomponent are to (a) develop a classroom observation system, (b) strengthen the current learning assessment system, and (c) upgrade the EMIS. First, the project will support the development of a digital classroom assessment system based on the TEACH classroom observation tool to provide immediate feedback to support teaching and learning, including on the quality of teacher-student interactions.¹² This systematic approach to evaluation will create incentives

¹² TEACH is a free classroom observation tool designed by the World Bank team intended to be used in primary classrooms (grades 1–6) to help low- and middle-income countries track and improve teaching quality.



for the establishment of teacher (peer) learning communities within schools to promote the exchange of good practices and lateral accountability among teachers.

39. Second, this subcomponent will support the MEES in carrying out three types of students learning assessments: (a) the international assessment Program for Analyzing Education Systems [*Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN, PASEC*]; (b) AALEB and AALES, also supported under the QEFA Project; and (c) formative assessments (to be used by the MEES), aligned with the structured pedagogical and coaching programs supported under Subcomponent 2.1 and the targeted intervention to prevent students from dropping out under Subcomponent 3.1. The project will support the student learning assessments to be carried out, analyzed, disseminated, and used for program development and decision making.

40. Third, the project will also support the upgrade of the EMIS that was developed under the STP QEFA Project (*Sistema Integrado de Gestão Escolar, SIGE*) specifically to be able to (a) use the new learning assessment system for timely decision making and (b) facilitate exchange of data to monitor the conditionalities of the Vulnerable Families Program (VFP). The EMIS will be redesigned by information system specialists to incorporate these new features. The upgraded EMIS will be used as an entry point to the social registry and identification of beneficiaries for the VFP.

Component 3: Reaching the Most Vulnerable (US\$1.09 million equivalent)

41. Component 3 will support targeted interventions to prevent students from dropping out and to promote their success in school. This will be possible with the provision of targeted support to low-performing students who are at risk of failing and dropping out—promoting their learning, reducing the likelihood that they will drop out, and increasing the likelihood that they will succeed in school.

42. This component aims to support improved learning outcomes among students who are lagging behind by preventing them from repeating and dropping out of school and to reduce the number of out-of-school children. Under this subcomponent, the proposed project will support (a) the development of an early warning system based on the formative assessment reports to identify students at high risk of school dropout/failure and support those students, (b) implementation of an adaptive learning course (on tablets) for at-risk students, and (c) implementation of a remedial education program and related policies.

43. Under this component, the proposed project will support the MEES to develop a model to identify and monitor students with learning difficulties who are at high risk of school failure and dropout. It will also support the MEES in developing an adaptive learning program using digital technology (tablets which can be used off-line) and providing training in remedial teaching to basic education students. The remedial teaching will emulate the approach of 'teaching at the right level' (TARL) developed in India. This subcomponent will also finance the development of accelerated education programs focused on overage students and related teacher training, given that children who are overage are more likely to drop out of school. Finally, it will include corresponding policies for improving grade promotion rates.

44. Component 3 will also promote technical cooperation between the MEES and Ministry of Labor, Solidarity, Family, and Professional Training (*Ministerio do Trabalho, Solidariedade, Família e Formação Profissional, MTSFFP*) to implement the VFP that provides economic support to poor households, by delivering bimonthly cash transfers conditioned on school attendance of the family members of school



age. The VFP was developed under the IDA-financed Social Protection and Skills Development Project (P163088). The MEES will collaborate with the monitoring of school attendance of children ages 6–17 years. The project will cover: (a) the alignment of the M&E systems to strengthen conditionalities monitoring; and (b) capacity-building activities on the importance of demand-side interventions to promote girls' empowerment.

Component 4: Project Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Capacity Building (US\$2.49 million)

45. This component will consist of two subcomponents: (i) project coordination and monitoring and evaluation; and (ii) capacity development, research and policy analysis.

Subcomponent 4.1. Project Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) (\$1,02 million)

46. **The main objective of this subcomponent is to support the MEES in effective project coordination, procurement, financial management (FM), M&E, environmental and social safeguards, and project communications.** It will support the establishment and maintenance of a Project Coordination Unit (PCU) that would be responsible for coordinating project-supported activities and overseeing implementation of the project. The fiduciary activities will be carried out by the Project Fiduciary and Administrative Agency (*Agência Fiduciária de Administração de Projetos*, AFAP), supported by a number of DPs in STP. This subcomponent will cover the costs of project coordination, fiduciary requirements, environmental and social safeguards, and M&E activities, including operational costs by the PCU and AFAP as well as M&E activities.

Subcomponent 4.2. Capacity development, research and policy analysis (US\$1.42 million)

47. **This subcomponent will support efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of the MEES to support girls' empowerment and quality education for all in basic and secondary education.** TA will be provided for capacity development on key education areas/activities and to finance studies/research on critical topics, including: (a) the effectiveness of phonetic and constructivist literacy strategies; (b) the effects of repetition on socioemotional skills; (c) the impact of programs on changing teachers' mindsets with regard to student failure and repetition; and (d) revision of the legislation pertaining to overtime payment for teachers, working conditions, working time requirements, and task profiles. At the preschool level, the project will support the establishment of an M&E system based on the Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO) instrument. The project will also support an evaluation study on the pilot of two alternative types of preschool service delivery: community and public private partnership, which will guide future education interventions.

48. This **subcomponent** will also support the strengthening of second chance and inclusive education. The objective of this subcomponent is to strengthen the second chance education for out of school adolescents and adults in 2nd cycle of basic education and secondary education. The key activities are (i) to develop an in-service teacher training program, and (ii) provide TLMs for second chance education, both gender-sensitive. Also, the proposed project will promote inclusive education through: (i) inclusion of indicators in the EMIS to capture disability/functioning status for better decision-making about inclusive education; and (ii) and support the implementation of the existing Development Strategy for Special Education.



Component 5: Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC) (US\$0)

49. **This component is included in accordance with OP/BP 10.00 (Investment Project Financing), paragraphs 12 and 13, for contingent emergency response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed.** It will allow the Government to request the World Bank to provide rapid reallocation of project funds to respond promptly and effectively to an eligible emergency or crisis that is a natural or artificial disaster or crisis that has caused or is likely to imminently cause a major adverse economic and/or social impact. If the World Bank agrees with the determination of the disaster and associated response needs, this component will draw resources from the categories financing Components 1, 2, 3, and 4 and/or allow the Government to request the World Bank to recategorize and reallocate financing from other project components to cover emergency response and recovery costs. Disbursements will be made against a positive list of critical goods or the procurement of works and consultant services required to support the immediate response and recovery needs. An Emergency Operations Manual will apply to this component, which will be part of the POM, detailing financial management (FM), procurement, environmental and social safeguards, and other necessary implementation arrangements.

Cross-cutting Areas

50. **COVID-19 response.** The project will support a timely COVID-19 response, under components 1 to 3, with the implementation of the following emergency measures: (i) WASH in schools, including deep-cleaning of schools in order to prepare them for the return of students once schools reopen, (ii) distance learning and training using different channels (television, radio, and internet), (iii) increase connectivity and adaptive learning programs using tablets for the most vulnerable, (iv) deliver materials with instructions to parents (e.g. scripted manuals, homeschooling supplies, reading books). The timing and dosage of each intervention will take into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 response on the education sector.

51. **Gender and equity consideration in project design.** A gender-sensitive social screening has been carried out as part of the project preparation to identify main constraints faced by girls and boys in the education system. The screening informed the project design, which reflect a gender-sensitive approach throughout its proposed interventions with a specific focus on girls' educational, social, and psychological empowerment. The proposed gender approach includes keeping girls in school and promoting their return after pregnancy, positive female role modelling to promote behavior change, reducing girls' stigmatization and gender-based preconceptions, and increasing girls' self-esteem to negotiate their relationships and make healthier decisions.

52. **Citizens' engagement.** Citizen engagement is embedded in the project design through various activities, including consultations, collaboration, a school-based development approach, beneficiary feedback surveys, and grievance redress mechanisms (GRMs). The project will support the establishment of SMCs at schools under Subcomponent 2.2. SMCs will be responsible for facilitating dialogue among school stakeholders and decision making at the school level. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) has been developed during project preparation to ensure that a high degree of engagement is maintained throughout project implementation.



53. **Digital technology.** The use of disruptive technologies and the development of digital skills will be promoted under the proposed project. The project design will aim to strengthen the information system and interoperability standards of the MEES to devise innovative and efficient solutions for accelerated teaching and enhancing students’ experience in the classroom. For example, the project will promote an adaptive learning program to support teachers’ and students’ use of tablets and energized textbooks to promote distance education for teacher training and access digital content and the development of digital skills of teachers and students in basic education. Tablets and energized textbooks are practical, focused, and easy to understand. The project will also promote low-cost technological solutions, such as open source software, to guarantee sustainability of the activities.

54. **Inclusive education.** The project proposes a cross-cutting approach to support special education in the MEES, including the support to teachers and disabled students toward achieving a more inclusive education system. Also, the project will support inclusive education by supporting capacity-building activities of the reduced special education team of the MEES. The following interventions will be supported under the project: (a) inclusion of indicators in the EMIS to capture disability/functioning status, (b) TA to the Government to further strengthen the existing Development Strategy for Special Education, and (c) capacity building of the MEES staff on inclusive education. The project design will reflect the World Bank Group’s Commitment on Disability and Inclusive Development and support the Government’s aim in promoting inclusive education.

Legal Operational Policies

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

Summary of Assessment of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

55. The Bank's environmental team visited 5 schools in the urban and rural areas of São Tomé Island. These visits allowed the team to observe and evaluate the physical conditions of the schools, the surrounding environment and the roads access. Of all the schools visited, the most relevant aspect identified was the precarious condition of the students 'and teachers' bathrooms. Regarding the social aspects, the social analysis highlighted the concerns related to teenage pregnancy, adolescent mothers and GBV, including school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), and their negative impacts on girls' education, specifically on their school attendance, retention, and reintegration. Boys face obstacles in pursuing their education as well. When families are facing financial constraints, male students are likely to leave school to start engaging in remunerative activities to economically support the family. Disabled children and adolescent constitute as well a vulnerable groups given their difficulties in accessing the education system.



E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

56. **The MEES will be responsible for the overall implementation of the project.** MEES will work closely with other education and non-education agencies on project implementation, including the Ministry of Planning, Finance, and Blue Economy and AFAP. The PCU will be established under the MEES to strengthen the technical capacity of the MEES. With a PCU for the project, AFAP will provide support on fiduciary and environmental and social (E&S) safeguards activities of the project. Specifically, AFAP will be in charge of disbursements, procurement, financial management, and the E&S safeguards. The staff of the PCU will include experts in project coordination and M&E. Once the project becomes effective, the PCU will also hire short-term consultants to support implementation, as needed.

57. **The technical directorates of the MEES will be responsible for implementing their activities according to the POM and action plan.**¹³ A review of the POM and action plan implementation achievements and constraints will be carried out annually and will form the basis for the preparation of the following year's action plan, according to priorities and potential economic and social changes. The description of the roles and responsibilities of each institution are described in annex 1.

58. **To assist the MEES with project implementation, AFAP will be designated as a fiduciary agency and responsible for procurement and FM.** AFAP will liaise with the directorates responsible for the implementation and procurement roles of the IPF activities and will report on the progress made on a quarterly basis. AFAP will also provide training and technical support to the MEES to implement the project. The FM activities will be conducted by the current team of AFAP.

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Implementing Agencies

¹³ The action plan is a course of action or strategy to achieve one or more goals of the project.



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APPROVAL

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