Report Number: ICRR0023919

1. Project Data

Project ID P146831	**Project Name** DR Support to the Nat. Education Pact
Country Dominican Republic	**Practice Area(Lead)** Education

L/C/TF Number(s) IBRD-85400,IBRD-89130	**Closing Date (Original)** 30-Jun-2020	**Total Project Cost (USD)** 47,500,000.00
Bank Approval Date 30-Sep-2015	**Closing Date (Actual)** 30-Jun-2023	

	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	50,000,000.00	0.00
Revised Commitment	47,500,000.00	0.00
Actual	47,500,000.00	0.00

Prepared by	Reviewed by	ICR Review Coordinator	Group
Judyth L. Twigg	Salim J. Habayeb	Susan Ann Caceres	IEGHC (Unit 2)

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

According to the Loan Agreement (p. 4) and the Project Appraisal Document (PAD, p. 6), the project's objectives were "to improve the Borrower's capacity to: (i) recruit and train primary and secondary school teachers; (ii) assess student learning in primary and secondary education; (iii) evaluate the quality of service provided by Public Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers; and (iv) enhance the process for decentralizing public school management."

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

No

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

The project contained four components, which were not revised during the project's lifetime:

1. **Improving capacity to recruit and train primary and secondary school teachers** (appraisal: US$25.375 million ; actual, US$22.875 million) was to carry out a comprehensive revision of the Ministry of Education's (MINERD's) primary and secondary school teacher recruitment and training activities, with a focus on <u>pre-service training</u> (through the revision of the Salomé Ureña Teacher Training Institute's (ISFODOSU's) teaching degree curricula and competence profiles, creation of specialized degrees for secondary school teachers, implementation of a quality assurance and monitoring system for ISFODOSU, implementation of a scholarship program to attract high-performing secondary students to ISFODOSU pre-service degrees, implementation of a remedial program for admitted students with skill gaps, and revision of the career structure and promotion schemes for ISFODOSU teachers); <u>human resources management</u> (through design and implementation of a competitive induction exam and selection process for public school teachers, administrators, and staff; launch of an online teacher recruitment system; and launch of web-enabled management information systems); <u>the teaching career</u> (through support for the design and adoption of guidelines for the teaching career, a revised teacher evaluation based on international best practices, and implementation of a certification system); and <u>in-service training</u> (through development and piloting of in-service training programs for current teachers through the National Institute of Education and Training of Teachers (INAFOCAM), revision of guidelines and evaluation of existing in-service programs, institutional capacity strengthening for the INAFOCAM evaluation office, and an impact evaluation of INAFOCAM in-service programs).

2. **Improving capacity to assess student learning in primary and secondary education** (appraisal: US$13 million; actual: US$13 million) was to support the strengthening of the student assessment system through development and implementation of a national strategy for pre-tertiary student assessments, participation in and dissemination of international assessments, technical improvement of student assessments, design and implementation of a system for dissemination of results and use of assessment data, and development and implementation of a national assessment in early grades.

3. **Improving capacity to evaluate the quality of service provided by Public ECD Centers** (appraisal: US$5 million; actual: US$5 million) was to support the organizational design and institutional strengthening of the National Institute of Comprehensive Care for Early Childhood (INAIPI), through developing a strategic plan for INAIPI and quality standards systems for Public ECD Centers and personnel, and development and implementation of an information and communications strategy to disseminate standards of quality service delivery for the Public ECD Centers, improve public understanding of the *Quisqueya Starts with You* (QEC) program, and improve parenting practices. (*Quisqueya*, translated as "cradle of life," is an indigenous name for the island on which the Dominican Republic and Haiti are located. The QEC program is the government's flagship program for ECD.)

4. **Improving capacity to enhance the process for decentralizing public school management** (appraisal: US$6.5 million; actual: US$6.5 million) was to support the decentralization of MINERD's

functions and resources, through supporting the increase of established School Management Committees (SMCs) in public schools through transfers to SMCs, supporting a review of regulations and processes to increase efficiency of establishing SMCs, implementation of a functional expenditure system for SMCs, improving training for SMCs to develop school improvement plans and annual work plans, improving financial and procurement practices at the school level, and revising school auditing guidelines and procedures.

The project was to follow a results-based approach with 20 disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs). Disbursements were to be made against eligible expenditures under the 2014 National Education Pact. Estimated costs at appraisal included a front-end fee of US$0.125 million.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

The project was to be financed by a US$50 million Loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. No government contribution was expected or made. Actual spending was US$47.5 million, after it was determined that one DLI in the amount of US$2.5 million (adoption of a teaching career and evaluation system based on standards established by MINERD) would likely not be disbursed.

The project was approved on September 30, 2015, and became effective on December 9, 2016. The delay between approval and effectiveness was due to the need to gain Congress' approval; such delays are common among projects in the Dominican Republic (DR). Due to the delay in effectiveness, retroactive financing was allowed up to a maximum of US$10 million. The project closed on June 30, 2023, three years after its original closing date of June 30, 2020. It was restructured twice:

- December 10, 2019: The project was extended for 27 months, to September 30, 2022, to accommodate an additional financing (AF) request of US$100 million that was ultimately not approved by Congress. The AF would have included three new outcome indicators and new gender results indicators, but these ultimately were not incorporated when Congressional approval was not forthcoming.
- August 22, 2022: The closing date was extended by an additional nine months, to June 30, 2023, to accommodate delays in the formation and functioning of SMCs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The project's objectives were highly relevant to country context and government strategy. At the time of project appraisal, the DR had experienced decades of rapid economic growth but continued high levels of poverty and inequity. Low-quality education was seen as contributing to the weak linkages between growth and shared prosperity. The government's National Development Strategy for 2010-2030 identified investments in education to increase human capital as key to ending extreme poverty and boosting equality. However, despite having achieved significant gains in education access over the preceding decade, significant challenges remained with student learning outcomes. Regional student assessments conducted in 2006 found DR students ranking last, performing well below regional averages in all subject areas. Even students from upper income quintiles, while performing much better than lower-income students, performed poorly relative to similar socio-economic groups in other countries in the region.

The PAD (p. 2) argued that, in order to improve learning outcomes, the DR required improvement in the foundations and systems in place to formulate and implement quality-enhancing policies. DR's education system is managed by a complex set of institutions that has produced largely sound policies but implemented those policies unevenly and without robust evaluation. The sector is managed by two separate ministries: MINERD (responsible for delivery of public pre-university education, at the initial basic, and intermediate levels) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology (responsible for higher education, including courses related to pre-service teacher training). ECD programs, grounded in the QEC, fall under MINERD's INAIPI, a relatively new institute regulating provision of ECD services under QEC for children ages 0-4. Within this institutional landscape, the PAD presented evidence identifying four main underlying challenges that constrained education system performance: (i) MINERD's capacity to recruit and train teachers according to quality standards, (ii) MINERD's capacity to assess student learning, in particular in basic education, and the dissemination and use of that information by different actors in the system, (iii) MINERD's capacity to evaluate and ensure the quality of service provided for initial education (ages 0-6) that contributes to school readiness of children entering basic education, and (iv) MINERD's capacity to decentralize the school management system. The project's objectives responded directly to these challenges, and the Bank had the technical knowledge, operational experiences, and convening power to facilitate and incentivize progress in these areas.

The government had shown commitment to addressing these issues through doubling the pre-tertiary education budget (to four percent of gross domestic product [GDP] by 2013) and launching of the National Education Pact (NEP) in April 2014, valid through 2030. The NEP encompassed, among other priorities, reform of the teaching career through revision of pre-service and in-service teacher training programs, adoption of a culture of evaluation across all education sectors and actors, increasing the quality of early childhood education, and modernization and decentralization of the education system to increase its efficacy and efficiency. Implementation of the NEP was already under way at the time of project appraisal through an increase in teachers' salaries, revisions in teacher training and standards through ISFODOSU, implementation of a sample-based student assessment in grades 3-4 and 10, and design and early implementation of the QEC program. The project remained highly relevant to the MINERD 2021-2024 strategic plan, which contains five central axes: enhancing quality of education, improving competencies and welfare of teaching staff, strengthening the leadership and regulation of the education system, increasing social participation and active citizenship, and strengthening internal administrative processes and management.

This project was the Bank's first in DR's education sector in many years. The project was strongly aligned with the Bank's Country Partnership Strategy at appraisal (FY15-19), contributing to its Results Area of strengthening social services delivery and, under that results area, its outcome of improved quality of learning through implementation of a robust student assessment system. The project remained relevant to the next Country Partnership Framework (FY22-26), which contains a high-level outcome on increased number of high-quality jobs and an objective on enhanced quality of education and training, deliberately transitioning from this project's support for the NEP into analytical and financial products that support post-secondary level initiatives and gender equality initiatives at all levels.

Rating

High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

OBJECTIVE 1

Objective

Improve the Borrower's capacity to recruit and train primary and secondary school teachers

Rationale

The theory of change for this objective held that development of teacher standards and a revised entrance exam would produce a more selective, transparent, and meritocratic system of recruiting and selecting both teachers and students entering teaching degree programs. The design of new teaching degree programs, revising and adjusting in-service teacher training programs, and improving MINERD's teacher training institution (ISFODOSU) would lead to improved teacher training programs. Development of a teacher career framework and a new assessment process for teachers would provide more information and incentives for teacher performance and would guide teachers more effectively through their teaching careers. All of these outputs would, in turn, lead to improved capacity to recruit, train, and hire teachers. The theory of change for this and the other three objectives assumed that the ministry would have the knowledge and capacity to conduct these activities.

Outputs/intermediate outcomes

MINERD designed, adopted, and disseminated new professional standards for teachers (DLI5). The "Professional and Performance Standards for Teaching Certification and Development of the Teaching Career" were approved by the National Council of Education in 2014. According to the ICR (p. 16), approval of these standards established a national consensus on what is expected from teachers in terms of their knowledge and classroom performance. The standards were accompanied by regulations on teacher competencies.

A competitive entrance exam was designed and implemented for prospective teachers entering ISFODOSU, aligned with the new teacher professional standards (DLI2, DLI6). MINERD started administering this exam to hire teachers in 2015. In 2021, an evaluation consultant was hired under the project to ensure that these exams were aligned with professional standards; this consultant determined that the tests and standards were well aligned and provided recommendations for improving the clarity of some questions on the exams. ISFODOSU also improved the selection process by which it awards scholarships to better target high-achieving secondary school graduates. As a result of improved recruitment efforts, the percentage of applicants passing the more rigorous teacher recruitment exam increased from 70 percent in 2015 to 95 percent at project closure.

The project supported strengthening of the regulatory framework for pre-service teacher training. The "Regulation for Teacher Training Quality in the DR," approved in 2015, specified teacher competencies and the mandatory entrance exam, proposed an increase in minimum face-to-face classroom time from 1-2 days to 4 days/week, and included practice in schools as part of the training curriculum. In addition, ISFODOSU designed and implemented two new secondary-level teaching degrees (DLI8).

INAFOCAM adjusted its in-service training programs based on results from assessments and impact evaluations (DLI18).

A new teacher evaluation system, aligned with the new professional standards, was implemented in 2021 (DLI13). At least 20 percent of teachers at all levels of education now receive two evaluations per year, achieving the target. The system includes a self-evaluation, a supervisor evaluation, and a student-teacher evaluation. The results of these three assessments are used to determine teacher bonuses.

A new teaching career framework (DLI9) was not developed as planned, as this activity receded in priority with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, steps were taken toward design of a professional development plan for educators, including a revised career structure and promotion scheme (DLI17). According to the ICR (p. 18), this plan is currently pending approval by the ISFODOSU Board.

By project closure, INAFOCAM's and ISFODOSU's annual financial reports were being prepared using a new comprehensive financial management information system that was being implemented nationwide (SIGEF) (DLI12).

Outcomes

By project closure, all teacher positions were being staffed through the new teacher entrance exam (DLI1). The number of teaching positions staffed through the exam increased from 6,000 in 2014 to 40,126 in 2023, more than doubling the target of 19,000. Of the teachers in those positions, 79 percent have been women, essentially meeting the target of 80 percent.

Student positions in the teaching degree programs at ISFODOSU have been filled through the revised entrance exam since 2021. 26,686 student applicants have been admitted on the basis of this exam, exceeding the target of 5,600 student applicants. Of those applicants, 79 percent have been women, exceeding the target of 65 percent women applicants.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 2
Objective
Improve the Borrower's capacity to assess student learning in primary and secondary education

Rationale
The theory of change for this objective held that development of a new framework and strategy for student assessment, as well as development of an assessment to evaluate learning in the first three year of primary education and the application of international tests (Program for International Student Assessment, PISA),

would increase the amount and quality of available information on student learning outcomes. This information, together with the development of a strategy for dissemination of assessment results, would lead to improved capacity to assess student learning.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes

A medium-term student assessment strategy was developed, piloted, and began implementation (DLI7, DLI10). MINERD's Student Assessment Directorate staff received training on sampling, item design, database management, and statistical software (DLI19). Workshops and trainings were carried out with the Ministry of Education of Colombia on the development of instrument items for student assessment. A workshop on use and dissemination of international student assessments was completed. In 2022, MINERD prioritized two key activities: application of sample-based national student learning assessments of grades 3, 6, and 9 to estimate learning losses following the pandemic, and design of a student learning monitoring system for schools.

MINERD designed and administered a diagnostic, census-based Spanish and mathematics assessment for the first cycle of primary education in 2017 (grades 1-3) (DLI14). Reports with the results of this assessment were generated and disseminated at the regional, district, and school levels. MINERD also implemented diagnostic evaluations at the secondary school level (grades 6 and 9) in 2018 and 2019. In 2016, a government ordinance established census evaluations for all third, sixth, and ninth graders, representing the last grades of each education cycle. Beginning in 2017, one grade was evaluated per year, such that all three grades held their first round of evaluations before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A census evaluation of grade 3 took place in 2023, resuming the evaluation cycle.

MINERD administered the PISA in 2022 (DLI3), with results published in 2023. The project developed a strategy for disseminating and using the results data, in which 254 schools and 7,878 students participated.

Outcomes

By project closure, student learning outcomes for both the primary and secondary education levels had been generated, analyzed, and disseminated, as planned.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 3
Objective
Improve the Borrower's capacity to evaluate the quality of service provided by Public Early Childhood Development Centers

Rationale

The theory of change for this objective held that design and implementation of a strategic plan for INAIPI, including a quality assurance system accompanied by a communication strategy about that system would lead to a quality assurance system having been designed, functioning, and communicated. The inclusion in this system of clear quality standards for ECD centers and instruments for assessment would lead to improved capacity to evaluate the quality of services at early childhood centers.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes

The Dominican Institute for Educational Quality Evaluation and Research (IDEICE) and INAIPI evaluated the teaching quality of 30 QEC care centers using TEACH-ECE, a classroom observation tool that explores what goes on in ECD classrooms, focusing on the quality of teaching practices that nurture cognitive and language skills, socioemotional competencies, and executing functioning abilities for children ages 3-6. IDECIE and INAIPI staff were trained and certified to use the TEACH-ECE tool. Results reports from the assessments focused on areas where pedagogical practices required strengthening. The ICR (pp. 19-20) reported that analysis of the assessment data was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but that it was eventually completed. In April of 2022, decision makers and staff from MINERD, IDECIE, and INAIPI met to discuss the application of the TEACH-ECE tool and confirmed its utility in measuring teaching practices and promoting improvement.

Outcomes

By project closure, 50 percent of QEC care centers were evaluated against quality standards and their results were analyzed, meeting the target of 50 percent (DLI15, DLI20) and reflecting improved capacity to assess the quality of services.

Rating
Substantial

OBJECTIVE 4
Objective
improve the Borrower's capacity to enhance the process for decentralizing public school management

Rationale
The theory of change for this objective held that the development of communication and training campaigns on the roles and responsibilities of different SMC members, together with support for increasing the number and quality of SMCs, would lead to an increased number of trained and fully functional SMCs. A review of regulations on school-based management and support for schools would lead to a clear regulatory framework in terms of processes and roles of different school actors. Together, these interventions would produce improved capacity for decentralized public school management.

Outputs and intermediate outcomes

The project supported a communication and training campaign to inform SMC members about their roles and responsibilities, including training on how to form SMCs, SMC resource management, and financial accountability.

A government regulation on new manuals for school-based management, supported by the project, was issued in 2018. An additional government ordinance in 2019 redefined how funds for SMCs were managed and allowed for greater flexibility in schools spending while still maintaining flexibility and transparency (DLI11). The ICR (p. 20) noted that the rigidity of allowable spending under the previous legal framework had been a significant constraint on school development.

By project closure, out of 7,687 schools that could have SMCs, 7,276 schools had formed legally constituted SMCs, and 2,525 of those had received resources from MINERD (DLI4).

In addition to supporting SMCs, the project also strengthened decentralized education system management by redefining the roles and responsibilities of MINERD district and regional directors and establishing the first competitive recruitment for these roles, and by improving in-service training for school principals. The ICR (p. 21) noted that SMCs played a key role in the functioning and reopening of schools during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, with student support programs (including provision of technological resources to support distance learning) administered with the support of SMCs, and principals authorized to use decentralized funds for basic services like food rations.

Outcomes

In 2023, IDEICE carried out an audit to assess the number of SMCs that were fully functional. (Fully functional SMCs were those that were legally constituted, had an improvement plan and a bank account, and were receiving transfers from MINERD.) The audit randomly selected 304 of the 2,525 SMCs that were receiving MINERD funding for assessment, conducting interviews and reviewing the improvement plans at those 304 schools. The audit showed that 91 percent of the sample had prepared an acceptable improvement plan, and 85 percent had both an acceptable improvement plan and spent most of their resources according to that plan. Applying that percentage to the total number of SMCs receiving funds from MINERD, the ICR concluded that around 2,145 SMCs were adequately implementing their development plans (0.85 * 2525 = 2145) (DLI16).

Therefore, by project closure, 27.9 percent of SMCs (2,145 out of the 7,687 total SMCs) were successfully implementing their school development plans, exceeding the target of 10 percent. (Successful plan implementation was understood as SMCs spending money according to their improvement plans with the participation of all members of the SMC in decision making.)

Rating
Substantial

OVERALL EFFICACY

Rationale

The project reached 524,476 beneficiaries, of whom 58 percent were female, exceeding the target of 455,520 beneficiaries, of whom 53 percent were female. Three mechanisms of beneficiary feedback were implemented.

The PAD (p. 5) noted that several other donors and partners were highly engaged in the education sector, including the European Union, Inter-American Development Bank, United Nations Children's Fund, United States Agency for International Development, French Development Agency, and Government of Cuba. Initiatives financed by these partners complemented interventions under this project, but this project's focus areas were unique, such that it is plausible to attribute observed outcomes to this project's incentives.

With all objectives substantially achieved, overall efficacy is rated Substantial.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

At appraisal, a present discounted value (PDV) approach was used to estimate the net effect of the project on beneficiaries (PAD, pp. 60-68). Data for the analysis were obtained primarily from a 2011 household survey of the labor force conducted by the National Statistical Office. Assuming that project impact would occur through two channels in life-earning profiles—higher probability of school completion, and higher labor productivity growth—the project estimated the stream of benefits and costs of schooling over the lifetime of a representative student with and without the project. Project interventions were expected to yield a PDV of incremental benefits of US$1,819 per final beneficiary student. Sensitivity analysis showed the results to be robust under variance in adult labor earnings growth rate gains and secondary school completion rates.

The ICR's analysis updated that conducted at appraisal, finding a PDV of incremental benefits of US$1,923 per beneficiary. The result was higher than that in the PAD because secondary school completion rates were higher than those forecasted in 2018. Based on these results, the ICR found an internal rate of return between 41.6 percent and 61.8 percent, varying with assumptions on the future growth of adult labor earnings and the project's effect on the probability of secondary school completion.

There were some efficiencies in implementation, largely because the project did not require a dedicated implementation unit. The technical work of the project was carried out by personnel from MINERD, who were not compensated by the project. However, implementation efficiency was significantly affected by a three-year extension to accommodate the 14-month delay in effectiveness, the proposal but then failure to approve AF, and delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The delay in effectiveness was typical for Bank-financed projects in the country. The COVID-19 crisis affected MINERD staffing and diverted MINERD's attention to the development of inputs for the provision of distance learning. The largest negative impact on project efficiency stemmed from unsuccessful efforts at AF. The AF was approved by the Bank in December 2018 and signed by the Ministry of Finance in December 2019, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its redirection of priorities toward the emergency response, Congressional approval was not obtained before the 18-month deadline for declaration of effectiveness. The AF Loan Agreement was therefore terminated in June 2020. A new government administration took office in August 2020 and requested reinstatement of the AF. The Bank agreed to proceed with an exceptional reinstatement, establishing September 30, 2021, as the new effectiveness deadline. The government requested a four-month extension of this deadline, to January 31, 2022, due to an increase in the number of requests for Congressional approval to support multiple COVID-19 crisis responses, an environment of increasing political polarization, and lengthy scrutiny of loan agreements. The Bank agreed to this extension, but Congress did not meet the deadline, and the AF Loan Agreement was again terminated.

Although the PDV analysis demonstrated strong returns on the project's investment, the diversion of time and resources to an ultimately unsuccessful request for AF, delays in effectiveness and implementation, and significant COVID-19-related disruptions indicate that the project's results were not achieved at least cost. Project efficiency is therefore rated Modest.

Efficiency Rating

Modest

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 ☐ Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	41.60	100.00 ☐ Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome

The project's objectives were highly relevant to country context, government priorities, and Bank strategy. All of the project's four objectives were substantially achieved. Although a PDV analysis demonstrated strong returns on the project's investment, the diversion of time and resources to an ultimately unsuccessful request for AF, delays in effectiveness and implementation, and significant COVID-19-related disruptions indicate that the project's results were not achieved at least cost. With High relevance, Substantial efficacy, and Modest efficiency, the project's Outcome rating is Moderately Satisfactory, indicative of moderate shortcomings in its preparation, implementation, and achievement.

a. Outcome Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The project significantly strengthened MINERD's institutional capacity, with student learning evaluations now integrated into the regulatory framework; MINERD staff well trained on sampling, data management, and evidence-based methodologies; commitment to continued participation in international student assessments, use of the TEACH-ECE tool, and use of assessment data to inform policy making; strengthening of a culture of meritocracy through teacher and ISFODOSU entrance exams; and successful establishment and ongoing functioning of SMCs. The ICR (p. 29) noted that these elements have "collectively built a sustainable framework for maintaining and enhancing educational practices after project closing."

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project emerged from a deep assessment of the educational landscape and broad commitment among all stakeholders, including the government, to bring about transformational change, evidenced by the signing of the 2014 NEP and an increase of resources to the sector to almost four percent of GDP. Key lessons were explicitly learned from other Bank projects in the sector, including the role of political economy as a key determinant of project outcomes, the importance of ensuring implementation readiness across all involved agencies, and the importance of coordinating with other interventions and donors. Institutional and implementation arrangements were thoroughly detailed (PAD, pp. 49-59), including the designation of MINERD's Office of International Cooperation (OCI) as the project coordination unit and the formation of a Steering Committee to oversee timely coordination and reporting. Risk assessment was thorough, identifying substantial political and governance risks (mitigated through the Bank maintaining a broader dialogue with all relevant stakeholders), sector strategies and policies risks (mitigated by supporting the government to maintain participatory processes that MINERD had already established to anticipate and deal with potential resistance from teachers and teachers' unions to new policies), and institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability risks (mitigated through collaboration with other donors to support the government in strengthening INAIPI and implementing the results-based approach). The project's design and results framework were clear and logical. M&E arrangements were robust (see Section 9a).

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank team engaged with MINERD and OCI teams effectively across the project's lifetime, with engagement intensified when implementation was progressing more slowly, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Bank's engagement helped smooth technical challenges encountered by MINERD and facilitate important changes and updates to government regulatory frameworks. The government's ICR (p.

64) credits the Bank team's specialists as "decisive" in supporting achievement of DLIs and addressing implementation issues as they arose. The project team later added that the Bank was highly proactive in addressing the challenges related to approval of AF, deploying all available resources in a sustained effort to resolve the problem.

Quality of Supervision Rating
Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating
Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design
The project's objectives and theory of change were clearly stated. Regular government information systems were to be used to monitor progress. DLIs were clearly defined, with amounts and calendar years of expected completion as well as detailed verification protocols for each DLI specified in the PAD (pp. 43-48). OCI was to be in charge of overall M&E activities, supported by input from each of the units carrying out project activities. OCI was to send biannual progress reports to the Bank. An impact evaluation of teacher training was to be carried out by INAFOCAM.

b. M&E Implementation
The results framework was not amended during project implementation. The government presented adequate data to verify compliance with DLIs. Project monitoring reports were created every six months using regular administrative data from MINERD. Training sessions were carried out for MINERD staff to ensure adequate data collection and analysis. The impact evaluation of INAFOCAM in-service programs was implemented as planned.

c. M&E Utilization
M&E data were monitored and updated by the project implementation unit, allowing the Bank team to review progress. Adjustments were made to INAFOCAM in-service programs based on data and analysis from the impact evaluation. Data from student assessments were used to improve policy and decision making.

M&E Quality Rating
Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

The project was rated Environmental Assessment category C. No safeguard policies were triggered.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

At appraisal, the Bank assessed that OCI had the capacity to handle loan proceeds using country systems in the education sector. MINERD's Department of Management and Decentralization was to oversee, monitor, and supervise transfers to SMCs, for whom the government had conducted comprehensive fiduciary training. Regular audits were conducted to identify potential issues. The project's financial management rating was moderately satisfactory throughout implementation, with the exception of a downgrade in May 2021 to moderately unsatisfactory because of an overdue audit report and failure to submit interim financial reports. The rating returned to moderately satisfactory in July 2022.

As the project was disbursed through DLIs, it involved minimal procurement. Procurable items financed under the eligible expenditure program were to be limited to small goods and minor works financed under transfers to SMCs and would be procured in accordance with Bank guidelines. Ultimately, the only procurement conducted by the project was the selection of the audit firm. The procurement rating was satisfactory throughout the project's lifetime.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

None reported.

d. Other

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11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Shortcomings in implementation efficiency related to considerable delays in project effectiveness and implementation, interruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and repeated attempts to secure Additional Financing that was not ultimately approved.

Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial
Quality of ICR	---	Substantial

12. Lessons

The ICR (pp. 29-30) offered several insightful lessons, adapted here:

Aligning a project with medium or long-term sectoral policies provides a solid foundation that ensures continuity, though continued efforts and political economy analysis are necessary to sustain momentum through periods of political transition. In this case, the project fully supported the 2014 National Education Pact, and the broad support for that strategy enabled continued progress through a turbulent change of government in 2020. That turbulence, however, caused efforts as securing Additional Financing ultimately to fail.

Empowering decentralized entities with financial decision-making authority can lead to more efficient and relevant allocation of resources, but that autonomy must be accompanied by efforts to ensure financial integrity and transparency. in this case, School Management Committees were provided with comprehensive training on financial practices and the use of Annual Operations Plans to ensure that they had the tools to allocate funds toward the schools' best interests.

The use of DLIs can incentivize important regulatory reforms when they are well aligned with government objectives and priorities. In this case, the Ministry of Education had support (and pressure) for reform from other government ministries, including the Ministry of Finance, facilitating regulatory changes and their implementation.

13. Assessment Recommended?

No

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was clear and candid, though it was frequently repetitive. The quality of data and analysis was adequate. There was some inconsistency in reporting of data between the main text and the results annex (Annex 1). The ICR's lessons were clear, insightful, and well supported by the main narrative.

a. Quality of ICR Rating
Substantial