1. Project Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project ID</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Practice Area (Lead)</th>
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<tr>
<td>P082908</td>
<td>CO (APL2) Rural Education APL II</td>
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<tr>
<th>L/C/TF Number(s)</th>
<th>Closing Date (Original)</th>
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Sector(s)
- Sub-National Government(32%):Central Government (Central Agencies)(19%):Primary Education(17%):Secondary Education(17%):Early Childhood Education(15%)

Theme(s)
- Rural services and infrastructure(50%):Education for all(50%)

2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

This project is the second phase of an APL that started in 2001. The overall Rural Education Program’s objectives were to improve access to quality basic education in rural areas and to support the development of social capital. The objectives of this project (Phase II), as stated in the Loan Agreement (LA), were “to increase the rural population’s access to quality education from pre-school to upper secondary level, promote higher retention of children and youths in the school system, and improve education programs relevant to rural communities and their school populations” (p.4).

The objectives as stated in the PAD were somewhat different: to “increase access to education in rural areas from pre-school to upper secondary education in an equitable manner, promote higher retention of children and youths in the school system, and improve the quality
and relevance of education for rural communities and their school populations.” (PAD, p.6). The objectives in LA will be the basis for this ICR Review.

A Level 1 restructuring approved by the Board in June 2010 replaced the PAD's objectives with those stated in the LA. This restructuring, as well as a second one (Level 2) on November 2013, also proposed changes in outcome indicators and targets, and thus this Review requires a split outcome rating.

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

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?
Yes

Date of Board Approval
06-Jul-2010

c. Components

The project had three components as stated in the PAD:

1) Improving Departmental Secretariat of Education and municipal management capacity for rural education quality (IBRD US$5.25 million at appraisal; US$4.98 million actual):
At the Ministry of Education (MEN) level, this component was to support the establishment of a management specialized team, and the design of methodology, manuals, multimedia instruments, and workshops related to technical assistance and training for certified education secretariats at the department and municipal levels (ETCs). At the local level, it was to provide technical assistance to identify rural education needs, prepare sub-projects addressing curricular, pedagogical, multicultural, and bilingual education challenges, and support rural education improvements in participating municipalities. It also aimed at providing technical assistance to indigenous associations in areas with ethnic populations to prepare and implement subprojects focusing on linguistic policies and materials, teacher training, and curricula.

2) Strengthening rural education management to reach at the school level better and equitable results in terms of access, completion and quality of learning (IBRD US$28.69 million at appraisal; US$25.98 million actual):
This component aimed at increasing equitable access and student retention in rural education, improving overall quality of beneficiary schools, enhancing teachers' capacity to implement a competency-based curricula (that includes basic, citizen, and job skills), fostering English as second language, promoting peaceful conflict resolution strategies, and improving school staff's management and pedagogical skills. It was divided into four sub-components:

2.1) Access and retention: the adaptation and implementation of Flexible Pedagogical Models (Modelos Educativos Flexibles-MEFs), including cultural and bilingual adaptations in territories with ethnic populations. This sub-component also supported contracting with private providers for the use of these models, teacher training to promote English language teaching, learning tools to implement pedagogical models, and school furniture and renovations (classrooms, dining rooms, sanitation areas).

2.2) Quality improvement: rural education quality subprojects targeting underperforming schools. Interventions included training to develop competency-based curricula more articulated with the labor productive sector, teacher training, and use of information and communication technologies.

2.3) School-based management: consultancy services to evaluate (leadership, planning, funds management, monitoring and improvement plan results) the merged urban-rural school management model implemented in Phase I, internships for teachers in low performing networks to experience best practices in identified networks, and preparation of institutional improvement plans for low-performing networks.

2.4) Teacher training colleges: Institutional improvement projects in teacher training colleges to shape curricula compatible with competencies and skills needed in rural contexts, and to enhance management skills to administer rural schools. All of these actions were to enable these colleges to obtain accreditation renewal credentials.

3) Strengthening Ministry of Education for project coordination and monitoring and evaluation (IBRD US$6.06 million at appraisal; US$5.2 million actual): This component was divided into three sub-components:

3.1) Studies to promote quality education, including research on educational policies in areas such as the impact of frequent turnover of rural teachers on quality education, incentives for teachers in rural areas, and adaptation of education models for preschool, primary and
secondary schools, etc.

3.2) Support for development of a system of monitoring and evaluation to systematically follow project actions (collect, compare, assess performance) and impact evaluation, including training in monitoring, and consultancy services.

3.3) Project management.

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

Project costs, Financing, and Borrower Contribution: Total project costs were estimated at appraisal at US$ 50 million, from which US$ 40 million were IBRD financing and US$10 million were the Borrower's contribution. IBRD financing for this Phase II doubled the loan amount at Phase I because of the government’s intentions to accelerate implementation. Cost savings in monitoring systems, due to economies of scale in purchasing and implementation (component 3), were used to introduce a new in-service and in situ teacher-training program (Desarrollo Profesional Situado-DPS) under component 2 in 2013. Total disbursement was US$ 37.39 million (US$ 2.61 million were not used due to cost savings in this later implemented program) (ICR, p. 6).

Dates: The project went through four restructurings, and the original closing date, December 31, 2013, was extended twice.

1) A Level 1 restructuring in June 2010 changed indicators and targets to better reflect project context and harmonize project indicators with those used by the MEN to simplify M&E. Specifically, the restructuring formally replaced the PAD’s PDOs with those stated in the LA, modified 3 out of 5 PDO indicators, dropped the remaining 2 PDO indicators, and revised and dropped several intermediate outcome indicators.

2) At a Level 2 restructuring in November 2013, PDO indicators were revised and one was dropped, an intermediate indicator was shifted to be a PDO indicator, seven intermediate indicators were revised, and funds between components were reallocated. Modification of baseline and target values responded to an expansion of the project scope that benefited 17 additional certified education secretariats at the department and municipal level (ETCs) and hence 3,100 rural schools since the 2010 restructuring. The closing date was extended for 18 months (until June 2015) to complete component 2 and 3 interventions and ensure achievement of PDOs (e.g. completion of ethno-indigenous education plans, and studies of component 3 including the impact evaluation).

3) A Level 2 restructuring in June 2015 extended the closing date to November 2015 to ensure completion of the impact evaluation and rural policy guidelines.

4) Finally, a Level 2 restructuring in October 2015 reallocated funds between cost categories to complete the impact evaluation and rural policy guidelines.

3. Relevance of Objectives & Design

a. Relevance of Objectives

The project’s objectives had high relevance under both the original and revised outcome targets. Despite substantial progress having been made towards the achievement of universal education at the primary level in Colombia, regional disparities in access to quality education persisted, especially for the preschool and secondary levels in rural areas. Even though objectives did not have an explicit equity focus, they implicitly addressed inequity by targeting the education gaps between rural and urban areas. Objectives were therefore highly relevant to the World Bank Group’s (WBG’s) Country Partnership Strategy FY2008-2011 for Colombia, which focused on poverty alleviation and equity of opportunity with special emphasis on the regional dimension of poverty, including rural education.

The PDOs remained highly relevant at project closing. They are consistent with the Government’s National Development Plan 2015-2018 (Todos por un Nuevo País), which emphasizes the need to reduce access and quality gaps in education across population groups and regions. The project's emphasis on increasing access to relevant education by rural communities is also aligned with the WBG’s Country Partnership Framework for FY2016-FY2021. This Framework discusses the enhancement of service delivery in target areas and improvement of skills consistent with labor market needs under its "Fostering a Balanced Territorial Development" and "Upward Social Mobility and Social Inclusion" pillars, respectively.

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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Revised Rating</th>
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b. Relevance of Design
The relevance of design is rated substantial for during the entire project life. The underlying logic of the results chain was coherent. Increasing access, completion, quality and relevance of rural education was intended to be achieved to a great extent through the implementation of rural education subprojects (including flexible pedagogical models, school physical improvements, English language teacher training, etc.). The flexible nature of project design allowed schools to choose interventions that best matched their rural education needs, although subproject activities were not defined from the outset. As a way to ensure coherence between objectives and subproject proposals, guidelines and operational manuals were developed to help subproject preparation and define eligible lines of interventions (PAD, p. 57).

The choice of an APL as the lending instrument was clearly explained and justified in the PAD (p. 5). The project team stated that Program for Results would have better fit the flexible nature of the design, but this instrument was not available at the time of project preparation. In 2013 the project added a new activity, the DPS program, to reinforce the achievement of objectives with respect to improving quality. There are two minor shortcomings. First, the statement of objectives was clear to a large extent, except for a lack of specificity regarding “education programs relevant to rural communities.” The “relevance” objective was associated with education “approaches” suitable for rural contexts and also to the “content” of curricula more compatible with skills needed in labor market. A better definition of relevance would have helped in the choice of a more adequate indicator to measure achievement of this objective (see Section 10 on M&E). Second, teachers’ turnover, a common phenomenon in rural areas, is likely to reduce the gains of teacher trainings in terms of improved pedagogical practices. The project acknowledged this issue and financed research to study its impact on quality of education, yet design did not internalize means to address the phenomenon.

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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Revised Rating</th>
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### 4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

#### Objective 1

**Objective**
To increase rural population’s access to quality education from pre-school to upper secondary level (ACCESS)

**Rationale**

**Outputs:**
The number of project beneficiaries was larger than expected at appraisal. While the project intended to benefit about 120-210 municipalities within 30 ETCs, it ended up reaching 36 ETCs, 696 municipalities, and 7286 rural schools. Project outputs include 51% of participating schools implementing MEF-Escuela Nueva (a multi-grade model known world-wide for more than 30 years); 41% implementing MEF-post primary; and 8% of schools applying other varieties of MEFs such as tele-secondary, learning acceleration, rural upper secondary, and preschool.

**Outcomes:**

- Original targets for gross enrollment rates (GER) of the “three levels of preschool education” for participating rural schools were not met. GER calculated for the three levels of preschool decreased from 45% at baseline to 42% at the end of the project, not achieving original target (55%).
  However,
- GER for upper secondary increased from 28% in 2007 to 65% in 2015, surpassing the original target of 35%.

PDO access indicators did not include GER at primary level because it was above 100% in 2006 in rural schools (PAD, p. 35), reflecting high participation including children out of primary school age. The associated indicator for lower secondary school was not part of the results framework of the PAD, and it was added in the 2010 restructuring.
Rating
Modest

Revised Objective
This objective did not change, although outcome targets were revised at the 2010 and 2013 restructurings.

Revised Rationale
Outcomes:
Baseline and target values for the enrollment (and completion) indicators were changed to reflect the demand-based nature of design in which more ETCs progressively participated in the project over time. Baseline values (and therefore, targets defined as percentage increases from baseline values) were recalculated by the ICR based on 36 participating ETCs.

- GER of the “last year of preschool education” increased from 81% (recalculated in 2009) to 83% in 2015 for participating rural schools. However, targets were not met (2010 target=85%; 2013 revised target=96%). Baseline and target values were particularly low at appraisal because the indicator measured enrollment combining the three preschool levels, while the 2010 and 2013 revisions used only the last year of preschool. In addition, the indicators had measurement problems: a) preschool enrollment tended to be inflated by schools until a MEN audit led to a reduction equivalent to 12 percentage points in rural areas; and b) population projections for preschool-aged children were likely overestimated in rural areas, as they were based on the 2005 census. The 2013 target of 96% that relied on a positive 2009-2012 trend (increasing from 81% to 95%) became unrealistically high.

- GER for lower secondary increased from a baseline of 65% (calculated in 2009) to 99% in 2015, exceeding the 2010 and 2013 targets (original=N/A; 2010 target=69%; 2013 revised target=94%) (no target defined in 2008 because this indicator was introduced at the 2010 restructuring).

- GER for upper secondary increased to 65%, surpassing original and revised targets (original target=35%; 2010 revised target=31%; 2013 revised target 54%).

Additional evidence from the ICR shows that, within the project areas, increases in the GER for lower and upper secondary in municipalities with at least 80% of students benefiting from the project were 5.2 and 3.7 percentage points higher than the gains in municipalities with a lower proportion of students participating in the project. Access improvements in secondary education are a plausible result of the implementation of MEFs, which entailed flexible studying times to allow for working students, curricula more based on local context, the introduction of self-learning modules, alternative information/communication technology (ICT) use in the classroom, learning guides accompanied by extensive tutoring, etc. Moreover, an evaluation financed by component 3 and completed in 2013 found that MEFs were effective to increase access and retention.

Rating Objective 1 Access 2010 revision of targets: Substantial
Rating Objective 1 Access 2013 revision of targets: Substantial

Revised Rating
Substantial

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Objective 2

Objective
To increase rural population's access to quality education from pre-school to upper secondary level (QUALITY)

Rationale
Outcomes:
The project supported a number of activities to raise education quality, including the introduction of a competency-based curriculum, teacher training, a new in-class evaluation system, the distribution of pedagogical material such as teaching guides, and improved school facilities (specifically, science laboratories and ICT equipment).
Intermediate outcomes related to quality cannot be assessed against original 2008 targets because these indicators were introduced at the 2010 or 2013 restructuring (see below), or were dropped at the 2010 restructuring due to difficulties in measurement and therefore no data was collected during the project's lifetime (see indicators 12-19, ICR, p. xii).

Intermediate outcome indicators introduced in the 2010 and 2013 restructurings show that:

- 9 studies were conducted to promote quality education for rural areas (original=N/A; 2010 target=9).
- 55% of participating rural schools applied strategies to develop at least one of the following aspects: (1) basic competencies, (2) relevance, (3) management strengthening (original=N/A; 2010 target=25%).
- 48 teacher training schools in targeted ETCs were assisted to improve pedagogical practices for rural areas (original=different unit of measurement; 2010 target=48).
- 44% of teachers in participating rural schools participated in in-service teacher training programs (original=N/A; 2010 target=N/A; 2013 target=44%).
- 45% of principals in participating rural schools implemented peer-to-peer teacher training (original=N/A; 2010 target=N/A; 2013 target=40%).

Other outputs contributing towards quality improvements include: about 25% of participating schools received in-service and in situ teacher-training programs (DPS) developed in 2012 based on in-class coaching and peer-to-peer support; the English for Colombia program reached about 200 schools in 83 municipalities training primary school teachers in English language and strategies to teach the language; 202 schools in 43 municipalities received training to teach basic language and mathematic skills called Lectura, Escritura and Matemáticas (LESMA); 118 schools received customized rural education audiovisual kits; and *peace games* programs to promote and strengthen citizenship competencies reached 77 teachers and more than 100 parents.

**Outcomes:**

Originally, quality related-outcomes were measured by average SABER test scores (SABER is a standardized academic achievement test administered in Colombia). SABER results in 2005 were used as baseline (with score values ranging from 55 to 59 points), but it was only in the 2009 and subsequent rounds that scores started being comparable over time:

- The average math test scores for Grade 5 and Grade 9 in rural schools in the participating territorial entities slightly decreased from 281 to 275 and from 272 to 268, respectively, between 2009 and 2014.
- The average language test scores for Grade 5 and Grade 9 in rural schools in the participating territorial entities slightly decreased from 278 to 273 and from 268 to 264, respectively, between 2009 and 2014.

The language of the indicator was revised at the 2010 restructuring, changing the unit of measurement:

- The percentage of students in the lowest levels of math achievement on the SABER test decreased from 75% to 72% for Grade 5, and from 84% to 82% for Grade 9 between 2009 and 2014, but reductions did not meet targets (2010 target=70% for G5 and 79% for G9).
- The percentage of students in the lowest levels of language achievement on the SABER test decreased from 72% to 68% for Grade 5, achieving the target (2010 target=68%), and also decreased from 73% to 71% for Grade 9 (not achieving the 2010 target=69%).

Further reductions in the share of low-performing students are likely to be observed moving forward, since learning achievements resulting from improved pedagogical practices could take some years to occur.

This PDO indicator was finally dropped in the 2013 restructuring, due to methodological concerns that prevented the comparability of results over time, and the fact that quality improvements are expected to occur only in the medium to long term. The project then lacked a PDO indicator related to quality from 2013 forward.

The ICR presents additional evidence to support quality impacts:

- Contrary to what was observed in project schools, student performance (measured by percentage of students at the lowest levels of test achievement) worsened in a comparable set of schools that did not participate in the project during 2009-2014.
- Also, the decrease in the share of low-performer students in schools that fully implemented MEFs was larger than that observed for the entire set of participating schools. Previous evaluations of Escuela Nueva (the oldest and largest MEF) found positive impacts on student achievement (Psacharopoulos, Rojas and Velez 1993, McEwan 1998, Hincapie 2015).
- The external evaluation financed by component 3 found that the project had no impact on student achievement. Lack of impact may have resulted from an identification strategy limitation (i.e. about 50% of control group schools participated in a teacher training program similar to the DPS implemented by the project) (Econometria Consultores and SEI 2015).
- However, the evaluation found other quality impacts of the project beyond student learning achievement. Project schools showed higher average time spent in academic activities and lower time being off-task than a sample of nationally representative schools observed in 2011, which generally showed better school-level indicators than rural schools (Bruns and Luque, 2015).
Also, there were statistically significant differences in teachers’ perceptions about their students’ learning and future schooling. More students in classrooms of teachers who benefited from the project were perceived to be motivated about learning and to display inquiry-based learning than those of comparison teachers. This is also the case with regard to high school graduation expectations.

Objective 3

Objective
To promote higher retention of children and youths in the school system (RETENTION)

Rationale
Similar to access-related outputs, the implementation of MEFs aimed at improving student retention. In particular, post-primary types of MEF coupled with the new school management system (i.e., school network reform) allowed graduates to continue studying at the next level of education without resettling even if the local school did not offer that level of education (see above, on the percentage of schools adopting such approaches).

Outcomes:
Project effectiveness in terms of student retention was measured by completion rates for participating rural schools (in this case, the relevant education levels are primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary):

- The project significantly exceeded completion rate targets at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Primary level completion rates increased from 37% to 87%, lower secondary from 11% to 59%, and upper secondary from 8% to 35% in the period 2007-2015, exceeding originally defined targets (82%, 34%, 18%).

Rating
Substantial

Revised Objective
This objective did not change, although outcome targets were revised at the 2010 and 2013 restructurings.
Revised Rationale

Outcomes:

- Completion rates at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels in 2015 also surpassed 2010 revised targets (81%, 30%, 17%).
- Completion rates at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels in 2015 also surpassed 2013 revised targets (80%, 53%, 32%).

The ICR used the participation of 36 ECTs to recalculate values for original baseline, target and actual values due to lack of backup calculations at appraisal. Completion rate calculations to assess achievement of targets after 2010 applied the same methodology that the project used to track progress since 2010.

The ICR presents additional evidence supporting student retention:

- Dropout rates at the primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels in participating schools decreased or remained constant in the period 2009-2013. The project evaluation, moreover, found positive and significant effects on completion rates in secondary school (Econometria Consultores and SEI 2015).
- Disparities between urban and project schools in rural areas were smaller at the primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels than were completion rate gaps between urban and non-project rural schools.

The assessment of attribution should also consider other factors, such as parallel programs, that may have impacted project outcomes. The PAD (p. 4) mentioned that “the project complements two of the main interventions of the Program against Extreme Poverty: the expansion of Familias en Acción (a conditional cash transfer program targeted to the poor), that would, inter alia, support access and retention of primary and secondary students...”. There is no comment on this parallel program in the ICR. Familias en Acción has been running since 2002 at national level. The project team recognized during the ICRR interview that access and retention outcomes could also have been influenced by this parallel program.

Rating Objective 3 Retention 2010 revision: substantial
Rating Objective 3 Retention 2013 revision: substantial

Revised Rating
Substantial

Objective 4

Objective
To improve education programs relevant to rural communities and their school populations (RELEVANCE)

Rationale

Outputs:

The project supported capacity building for the adaptation and implementation of rural education subprojects tailored to local rural contexts and needs. For instance, Productive Pedagogical Projects reached 105 schools in 39 municipalities developing social and labor market competencies. Also, studies were financed to guide the upgrading of the content and material of MEFs, and to support the development of the DPS program.

No data are available for the original intermediate outcome indicators related to relevance. Revised (in 2010 and 2013) intermediate outcome indicators related to relevance show that:

- 36 ETCs participating in the project included attention to ethnic populations in their Rural Education Plans (original=different unit of measurement; 2010 target=35; 2013 revised target=36).
- 26 ethnic groups formulated or designed models relevant for education services within the IPPF (original=N/A; 2010 target=26).
- 837,000 students benefited from flexible curricula and ethnic education services from participating rural schools (original=N/A; 2010 target=91,133; 2013 revised target=385,000).

**Outcomes:**

Originally, the project did not have an outcome indicator to measure improvement in project relevance to rural communities. The 2013 restructuring added “number of schools offering flexible curriculum and ethnic education services” as a PDO indicator:

- 7,286 schools offered flexible curriculum and ethnic education services according to IPPF (original=different unit of measurement; 2010 target=2,416; 2013 revised target=6,000 added as PDO indicator).

As supplemental evidence of project impact on relevance, an external evaluation found that ETC staff were especially satisfied with the capacity building received for the formation and adaptation of Rural Education Plans and the diagnosis of rural and ethnic education needs. The contribution of technical assistance and training to the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of plans was perceived as less strong (ICR, p. 26).

Other intermediate indicators show that:

- In terms of supervision and M&E support, all targeted ETCs had software installed and in use for management, reporting, and publicizing information regarding the progress of the project in their area (original=80%; 2010 revised target=#35; 2013 revised target=100%).
- The MEN has implemented the impact evaluation and published the results, although it had not released a set of policy actions based on the results of the evaluation at project closing (original=fully adopted). This is the only output indicator (out of 14) that remained unchanged until the end of the project.
- Finally, by the end of the project the government pursued stakeholder consultations and prepared a proposal for the adoption of a new rural education policy. The ICR considers that the new policy is very likely to be adopted, thus achieving the target (original=N/A; 2010 target=N/A, 2013 target=policy fully adopted).

**Rating**

Substantial

**Revised Objective**

Neither the objective nor targets were revised.

**Revised Rationale**

The relevance outcome indicator was introduced in 2013, and thus targets did not change over time. Therefore, there is no split rating for this objective.

**Revised Rating**

Not Rated/Not Applicable

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**Objective 5**

**Objective**

Comments on Program's objectives:

This project is the second phase of an APL supporting a Rural Education Program. The overall objective of the Rural Education Program is "to improve access to quality basic education in rural areas and to support the development of social capital."

**Rationale**

It is not possible to build an enrollment rate series from the beginning of the program in 2000 based on project documents. However, the
data demonstrate that the program has plausibly increased access and had a modest impact on quality of education in rural areas. However, there is not yet sufficient evidence to assess whether the program has significantly contributed to the development of social capital.

Rating
Not Rated/Not Applicable

Revised Objective
N/A

Revised Rationale
N/A

Revised Rating
Not Rated/Not Applicable

5. Efficiency

Cost-Effectiveness: Cost-benefit analyses based on a human capital approach were conducted at appraisal and completion. The ex-ante analysis considered labor market benefits measured by lifetime earnings due to increased years of schooling (as a result of increased student retention) and higher quality of learning. Direct project effects on dropout rates and learning test scores (0.10 SD student achievement test) were obtained from ex-post economic analysis of Phase I. Other social benefits derived from the project were mentioned (i.e. reduced mortality and violence), but it is not clear from the annex whether the analysis monetized such externalities. Cost estimates included cost per student, taking into account investment, operational, and opportunity costs but without details on calculations. The economic rate of return (ERR) for territorial entities ranged from 9% to 31% at appraisal. The economic analysis ex-post considered the same benefit categories as the ex-ante exercise using actual data such as number of students reached by the project, completion rates, and returns to education of each additional year of schooling and impact on students’ academic achievements. On this latter effect, the analysis considered a scenario that takes into account student achievements (0.12 SD) similar to ex-ante assumptions when the project evaluation found no impact on student learning. Since different cost categories were considered (excluding opportunity costs, while including government and household direct expenditures for additional years of schooling), results are not strictly comparable. Ex-post cost-benefit analysis results suggest that the project achieved outcomes in an efficient manner (ERR ranged from 12.7% to 32.4%, under different scenarios).

Qualitative efficiency: Implementation delays resulted in project extensions of almost two years beyond the original closing date to allow for the completion of some activities. The project experienced delays in initial project execution that were partially related to financial management processes between the MEN and the Trust Agent contracted to administer financial resources (Report No 54379-CO). Elections in the ETCs in October 2011 led to renegotiations of subprojects and co-financing budgets with new administrations. In early 2012, following a student strike event against a higher education reform bill, several project team members resigned, including the Project Coordinator and the Vice-Minister who oversaw the Project, leading to implementation delays. Frequent turnovers of teachers in rural areas were another a source of inefficiency, as benefits expected from the time and resources invested in training teachers to improve pedagogical practices may not have materialized in project areas.

Unit costs analysis/operational costs: As a positive source of efficiency, economies of scale in the purchasing and implementation of monitoring systems resulted in cost savings that were used to introduce an additional in-service teacher training (Report No 10829-CO).

The overall efficiency of the project is considered Substantial, as positive impacts (mainly in access and completion) are likely to yield economic returns higher than the cost of capital, and the operation was implemented within budget despite initial delays.

Efficiency Rating
6. Outcome

Original: Satisfactory. Both relevance of objectives and design are substantial. In terms of efficacy, half of the objectives were substantially achieved while the other half were modestly achieved. In particular, access outcomes showed some measurement difficulties at preschool level and lack an indicator for lower secondary until the first restructuring. Efficiency is rated Substantial.

2010 Revised: Satisfactory. Relevance of objectives and design remain as before since there were not significant changes in objectives or project activities that justified an adjustment in the rating. Changes in the language and targets of the results framework reflecting the demand-driven approach of the project enabled substantial progress on the access objective. Efficiency remains Substantial.

2013 Revised: Satisfactory. Same as above.

The resulting combined outcome rating is Satisfactory (0.11*4 + 0.63*5 + 0.26*5) = 4.89, which rounds to 5.

7. Rationale for Risk to Development Outcome Rating

The risk to development outcome is considered negligible. The project implementation design was consistent with the decentralized structure of the government system, where ETCs supported by a central MEN undertake the responsibility of implementing envisioned activities and decision making. The project also focused on strengthening the capacity at this subnational level to diagnose and address rural education needs. Thus the suitability of the project design to its operating environment likely increases the sustainability of the interventions. The alignment of project objectives with goals emphasized by the Government’s National Development Plan 2015-2018 also helps ensure high government commitment and consolidation of project gains. In particular, the ongoing national program Familias en Accion may contribute to sustaining the achieved outcomes. One concern is that the sustainability of quality education improvements may be hampered by factors outside the operation, such as...
teacher turnover in rural areas.

a. Risk to Development Outcome Rating

Negligible

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

Project design aimed to consolidate gains under Phase I, while addressing persisting challenges in rural education through the use of flexible models and other innovative approaches. In addition, the design took into account lessons learned from the previous Phase, as well as from other projects in Antioquia, Pasto, and Cundinamarca, which had meaningful decentralization aspects. However, this experience was not reflected in the preparation and design of the results framework and M&E systems, which turned out to be inadequate and exhibited significant shortcomings (see Section 10). The flexible nature of project design, while allowing schools to choose interventions that better matched their rural education needs, limited accountability because of the difficulty of defining ex-ante school-level indicators to measure the achievement of subproject outcomes. In terms of risk identification, while limited implementation capacity was foreseen at preparation and was tackled through intense technical assistance and training during project execution, there was still a high risk of project complexity at the ETC level that limited the proper integration of disparate activities. The risk of high turnover of teachers was not internalized.

Quality-at-Entry Rating

Moderately Unsatisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

The Bank’s supervision throughout the life of the project was adequate. Missions were conducted regularly, and technical and operational assistance were provided on time. This support helped the Bank team to develop a close relationship with the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) allowing for adequate coordination, project adjustments, solid fiduciary arrangements, quick resolution of challenges, and alignment of next steps. The Bank proactively identified and resolved threats to the achievement of relevant development outcomes, as it included additional training programs to strengthen the quality of education. This proactivity is also evidenced by the several restructurings aiming at solving measurement difficulties with the majority of indicators. However, definitions and calculation of baseline and targets still could have been clearer. Also, planning related to procurement processes could have been improved to coordinate better the acquisition of both goods and consulting services that supported subprojects and activities.

Quality of Supervision Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. Assessment of Borrower Performance

a. Government Performance

The government showed full commitment toward rural education development, and project objectives were fully aligned with the National Education Plan. Although there were two different presidential administrations and two territorial administrations over the life of the project, the government was careful to ensure continuity in its commitments to the project. However, changes in the leadership at the education ministry reduced the visibility of the project within the ministry and to some extent limited the range of action of the PCU since regular meetings, usually held with key education authorities to discuss progress and review activities, were passed down to lower-level managers. The project generated strong commitment from most ETCs and subnational governments to take ownership of strategies to improve rural education in their regions. This greater ownership allowed the technical assistance provided by the PCU to be better absorbed. Another minor shortcoming was that some inter-institutional procedures (for example, formal agreements between the national and subnational governments) were lengthy because of bureaucratic requirements.
Government Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

b. Implementing Agency Performance
The implementing agency was the Ministry of Education. The project budget was mostly executed, and interventions were implemented as planned. MEN exerted significant efforts to address potential low implementation capacity by providing technical assistance, training, and resources to ETCs at the beginning of the project. All targeted ETCs had software installed and in use for management, reporting, and publicizing information regarding the progress of the project in their areas. During the first three years the execution of the project was low, leading to an extension of the implementation of project activities by 18 months (see Section 11b). Another moderate shortcoming is related to the change in education authorities that reduced the synergies that project activities could have generated had they been better coordinated with other work and projects at the MEN.

Implementing Agency Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Borrower Performance Rating
Moderately Satisfactory

10. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design
Although the establishment of a well-designed project M&E system was highlighted as one of the lessons applied in the design of this project (PAD, p. 19), there were significant shortcomings in the design of M&E. The flexible nature of project design, while allowing schools to choose interventions that better matched their rural education needs, limited accountability because of the difficulty of defining ex-ante school level indicators towards the achievement of subproject outcomes. This also hampered measurement of project-level indicators, as baseline and hence target values inevitably changed with the number of participating schools. Lack of specificity of the objective related to relevance of education resulted in the absence of outcome indicators to measure that objective (which was eventually measured by an output type of indicator). The original PDO indicator for enrollment missed the lower secondary education level, which was added later.

In terms of preparation, baseline data at project preparation turned out to be erroneous and therefore targets had to be adjusted later, and several intermediate indicators lacked baseline values for quite some time after the project had started. Three out of five PDO indicators were eventually dropped, and 13 out of 14 intermediate outcome indicators were dropped or modified due to difficulties in measurement. The identification strategy of the project’s impact evaluation was not designed at the onset, leading to shortcomings in the establishment of an adequate control group. In particular, about 50% of teachers in the control group had received similar training to that supported by the project from a different source, resulting in challenges in measuring project impact on student learning achievements.

b. M&E Implementation
During implementation, data on key project indicators was generally collected and properly reported throughout the project, but M&E arrangements could have been stronger. Some existing baseline values proved problematic (because of lack of official population projections in rural areas for young children, and also due to the demand-driven nature of ETC and school participation that changed the number of beneficiaries over time). Subsequent project restructurings heavily modified the indicators’ language, units of measurement, baselines, and target values to allow proper collection of data to monitor. This meant that most of the indicators as defined in the PAD were not measured.

c. M&E Utilization
Most of the PDO indicators (except that related to relevance) measured project outcomes. The findings of a series of studies commissioned by the project were used to guide implementation and upgrading of pedagogical programs. Preliminary findings of MEF’s evaluation were followed by the introduction of an additional teacher training to reinforce the project’s quality impacts. To demonstrate achievement of outcomes, the ICR brings in additional evidence outside the project’s results framework.

On the other hand, the PCU focused heavily on management and fiduciary monitoring systems (recording requests for goods and services from ETCs, planning of acquisitions for such requests, and preparing mandatory reports to the ministry and the Bank), to the detriment of devoting more time and resources to follow-up with ETCs on important M&E analytic activities. The M&E quality rating is modest mainly because of design shortcomings.

### M&E Quality Rating

- **Modest**

### 11. Other Issues

#### a. Safeguards

The environmental assessment category was C. The project triggered the Indigenous Peoples (OP/BP 4.10) safeguard. Mission assessments concluded that the project allowed for adequate consideration of indigenous and Afro-Colombian issues in its activities. After implementation of specific activities addressing ethnic groups in 2014, there was wide recognition of this work done under the project. Communities visited during safeguards mission agreed on the importance of further support to ensure sustainability of achievements.

#### b. Fiduciary Compliance

- **Financial management**: Financial management performance was rated as Moderately Satisfactory in Implementation Status Reports during project implementation, despite low project execution during the first three years resulting from poor fiduciary arrangements with territorial entities, shortcomings in planning and budget processing, and high rotation of PCU leadership. These shortcomings were improved through capacity development during implementation. An external audit towards the end of the project noted ineligible expenditures in the amount of COP 259 million (approximately US$131,000), and corrective actions were taken resulting in improved performance.

- **Procurement**: procurement was considered satisfactory. Several assessments recommended improvements in terms of planning and follow up, consistency of criteria for evaluating proposals, staff training, and compliance with procedures that led to the development of an action plan that was partially implemented during project execution. Although no fraud and corruption issues were found, the external audit considered one contract ineligible for Bank financing because of substantial deviations from the Bank’s Procurement Guidelines.

#### c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The ICR identified a positive unintended outcome related to the strengthening of the ministry-wide teacher training program called Todos Aprender. The recruitment of the former head of the DPS program (which has concluded) as the new director of Todos Aprender has allowed that program to benefit from the experience and lessons learned during the implementation of the DPS program.

#### d. Other

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12. Ratings

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<tr>
<td>Quality of ICR</td>
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Note

When insufficient information is provided by the Bank for IEG to arrive at a clear rating, IEG will downgrade the relevant ratings as warranted beginning July 1, 2006.

The “Reason for Disagreement/Comments” column could cross-reference other sections of the ICR Review, as appropriate.

13. Lessons

The ICR formulated the following relevant lesson:

- Well-known, context-specific factors outside the control of a project can negatively affect its impact. In this case, project implementation witnessed high teacher turnover rates in rural schools. While retaining these teachers was outside the scope of the project, training could have been tailored so that built capacity could be more easily transferred from one teacher to his or her teaching peers. Ideally, an expert tutor can also provide training in the form of follow-ups to other teachers.

This ICRR adds:

- The usage of new research and evaluation evidence for adaptation of activities during project implementation allows for early introduction of new initiatives (like in-service teacher training) to foster achievement of objectives. In this case, an evaluation study financed by component 3 and completed by 2013 suggested weak quality impacts of the project, triggering the introduction of new initiatives in that area.
- Changes in national government can affect the fluid continuity of a project, generating needs for readjustment to fit the new educational policies of each new administration. While these adjustments can be legitimate, the manner in which they are done can affect the credibility of the national government in relation to the territories, making the effort more difficult to manage.
- There could be tension between ensuring a flexible project scope and designing an adequate results framework (for accountability purposes). While in this case project indicators were chosen to measure local outputs and outcomes, i.e. measuring progress in participating schools to contrast with non-participating school data, baseline and target values had to be repeatedly modified to account for the increasing number of schools implementing subprojects as a result of the demand-driven approach.

14. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

To allow the assessment of the effective consolidation and sustainability of the gains attained during the first phase of this APL, as well as the effectiveness of the innovative approaches implemented during this second phase.
15. Comments on Quality of ICR

Among the ICR's strengths, the report is well written and is candid in reporting the project's shortcomings. Moreover, it presents additional data beyond the formal results chain to assess efficacy, and the analysis of evidence is results-oriented as opposed to relying on an implementation narrative. This strong focus on results may respond to heavy modifications of indicators' wordings, baselines and target values during project execution.

The ICR’s shortcomings are related to the criteria used to assess the project’s relevance of design (pure M&E perspective), and to the formulation of lessons, some of which could have emphasized more directly the project’s specific experience generates and illustrates the lesson.

a. Quality of ICR Rating

   Substantial