

Project Name Colombia-Rural Education Project (APL)

Region Latin America and Caribbean Region

Sector Primary Education

Project ID COPE50578

Borrower(s) REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA

Implementing Agency
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Environment Category C

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1. Country and Sector Background

Poverty in Colombia remains a critical problem with strong rural and regional dimensions. Seventy percent of the people with incomes below subsistence live in rural areas. Among the underlying causes of rural poverty are the people's precarious access to basic social services and to productive resources. It is calculated that twenty-nine percent of the population in Colombia live in dispersed areas, or in centers of less than 5,000 people. However, there are in the country more than 900 municipalities and towns (municipios) with less than 50,000 inhabitants, where economic activities revolve around agriculture operations. The Colombian rural sector is a sector in crisis afflicted by poverty, rising unemployment and criminal and political violence. It is possible to determine that in Colombia poverty and poverty-related characteristics of rural inhabitants (such as geographic isolation and reliance on child labor for household income) have a negative impact on children's preparation for and access to schooling, as well as on the quality of the education provided to them. Drop-out and repetition rates are higher in rural than urban areas. These gaps in access to schooling (particularly wide at pre-school and post-primary levels) are closely associated with the low socio-economic status of rural dwellers and the limited availability of quality education services.

2. Objectives

The purpose of the Program is to improve the access to quality education in rural areas while also supporting, from the schools, the development of peaceful coexistence and civic values in the community. The Program will be implemented over a period of 9-12 years, through a series of phased three years projects, linked by a logical sequencing to allow results and lessons learned to be incorporated into the preparation and appraisal of

subsequent phases. During the first phase the project will support establishing the capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate the Program and initiating relevant investments focusing on basic education (particularly grades 0 and 6-9) in a cluster of selected rural municipalities.

3. Rationale for Bank's Involvement

The Bank has had a long standing commitment to provide technical and financial support to the education sector, and has made this a central priority of its country assistance strategy for Colombia. Team-centered work and participatory approaches to project preparation have characterized the most recent operations and allowed the Ministry to gain crucial institutional and technical knowledge as a result. Increased dialogue and cooperation at many institutional levels has contributed to a growing feeling of trust between MEN staff and Bank's team members.

4. Description

The Project's design is based on two integrated strategies. The Project will finance interventions that for their nature, size or scope fall logically under the responsibilities of the national level, the MEN. On the other end, it will also support demand driven sub-projects in selected rural municipalities organized at departmental level in Alianzas or strategic partnerships between the municipalities, the departments, the regional productive sector and other voluntary partners such as NGOs and Universities. During APL1, the project will finance Municipal Education Subprojects (PEMs) in a selected number of rural municipalities of at least eight departments of the country. Using a model which has been adopted successfully in various regions of the country, the Project supports the creation of eight Alianzas Estrategicas to lead the definition of a strategy for the development and strengthening of education services in the municipalities of each department. The Alianzas will assist rural municipalities either directly, by using the services of one of the partners, or indirectly, by contracting these services out, in the development of quality PEMs, based on the integration of various school PEIs. The Project will then finance the implementation of the sub-projects which will meet the minimum technical and operational standards identified by the MEN and described in the Project manuals.

Components:

1. Access and Quality of Basic Education: Its objective is to improve access to quality education in rural areas, through: (i) the adaptation and upgrading of various educational models to make them available to the municipalities for their sub-projects; (ii) the evaluation of other innovative models for rural education used in Colombia; (iii) the adaptation of the materials of Telesecundaria and Aceleración del Aprendizaje for their piloting and evaluation; (iv) the reform of Escuelas Normales, the teacher training schools, on the basis of a rethinking of the competencies and skills of rural teachers; and, (v) the training of teachers currently in service in rural areas.

2. Institutional Strengthening: The Project will promote the strengthening of the capacity at national, departmental and municipal level to manage, implement, monitor and evaluate the project. The Implementation Unit of MEN and the operational staff of the Alianzas, will receive technical assistance and training for the design and operation of

a comprehensive system for the monitoring of the physical, and financial implementation of the Project. Software programs and manuals will be produced and the staff will be trained on their use.

3. Education for Peaceful Co-Existence: The Project aims at supporting, from the schools, the development of peaceful coexistence and civic values in the community. Following the general philosophy of the program, the project will finance different sets of activities, articulated between a national and a decentralized level.

4. Implications for a Reform of Technical Education: The Project will promote the strengthening of an information system for technical education in rural areas, in the view of assessing the viability of a proposal for rural technical education with pertinence to the socio-economic conditions of the rural areas, to be implemented in the subsequent phases of the project.

5. Financing

	Total (US\$m)
Government	14.8
IBRD	20.0
LOCAL CONTRIBUTION	05.2
Total Project Cost	40.0

6. Implementation

The implementation scheme combines responsibilities between the public and the private sector and between national and local level. At national level, the MEN will coordinate and monitor the overall implementation of the different components of the Project. At departmental level, the project will support the creation and functioning of at least eight Alianzas Estratégicas (strategic partnerships of the public sector -MEN and the departmental and the focused municipal education secretariats- and the local productive sectors and additionally local NGOs and regional universities). The Alianzas will: (i) coordinate the implementation of technical assistance programs and will assist the municipalities in the development of quality sub-projects; (ii) approve the sub-projects for financing; (iii) coordinate and monitor the implementation of the focalized sub-projects; and, (iv) report to the MEN on project advances. At municipal level, a project coordinator will act as a liaison between the municipality and the Alianza and will assist with the design and supervision of the sub-project in the schools of the municipality. Project funds will be managed by an Administrating Agency, which will receive and disburse advances of Project funds according to the directives of the PIU and the Alianzas. The Agency will also be responsible for: (i) drafting bidding related documents; (ii) signing of contracts and payment to suppliers of goods and services; and, (iii) maintaining the appropriate financial and accounting practices to allow the supervision of its activities.

7. Sustainability

The Government of Colombia is giving priority to the development of rural areas to respond to the poverty and violence affecting these areas. Funding for program preparation has been provided even during severe fiscal crisis. The National Development Plan places education as the country's highest priority. The institutional sustainability will also be

guaranteed by the implementation mechanism adopted by the Project. It is hoped that the participation of the private and not-for-profit sectors in partnerships in the Alianzas will be a key factor to sustainable and effective education programs in the targeted municipalities.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector

This project supports the strategy of developing an innovative education strategy by relying for its implementation on a synergetic action between central, local government and private sector. In defining the main objectives to be achieved , as well as the implementation mechanisms, the rural education project relies upon the main lessons learned from past Bank projects, namely: clear definition of project objectives; need for project flexibility; reliance upon new mechanisms to work with local governments; need for an integrated management system; and, introduction of innovative financial mechanisms.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) N

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)

Issues : Since the project will not finance construction of new schools, it is not expected it will have a negative environmental impact.

11. Contact Point:

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Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.

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