



Program Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 23-May-2019 | Report No: PIDC192024



BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Program Data

Country Costa Rica	Project ID P169724	Parent Project ID (if any)	Program Name Learning for All in Costa Rica
Region LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN	Estimated Appraisal Date 14-Nov-2019	Estimated Board Date 20-Feb-2020	Does this operation have an IPF component? No
Financing Instrument Program-for-Results Financing	Borrower(s) Republic of Costa Rica	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education	Practice Area (Lead) Education

Proposed Program Development Objective(s)

The objective of the Program is to improve teaching and learning environments in basic education, with an emphasis on public schools serving the most vulnerable populations.

COST & FINANCING

SUMMARY (USD Millions)

Government program Cost	200.00
Total Operation Cost	200.00
Total Program Cost	200.00
Total Financing	200.00
Financing Gap	0.00

FINANCING (USD Millions)

Total World Bank Group Financing	200.00
World Bank Lending	200.00



B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

- 1. Despite being among the most stable and prosperous nations in the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC), Costa Rica faces rising inequality and high risk of natural hazards.** The overall poverty rate is one of the lowest in the region at 12 percent; however, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has not grown as quickly as in the region's other prosperous economies, and income inequality has been rising. Costa Rica went from being the second least unequal country in the region in 2000 (behind Uruguay), to the 15th in 2017, as inequality broadly fell across most of LAC. This inequality is reflected in growing gaps across both wealth quintiles and geographical regions, as incomes of the poor and of residents of border areas and indigenous territories have grown more slowly than incomes of the most well-off. Costa Rica is also at risk of several natural disasters, which pose a great threat under a changing climate. Costa Rica has the 8th highest economic risk exposure to three or more hazards and 6.8 percent of its total area is exposed to three or more adverse natural events. Further, 77.9 percent of Costa Rica's population (representing 80.1 percent of the country's GDP) reside in areas at high risk of multiple hazards, including floods and landslides, cyclones, storm surge, and sea level rise.
- 2. Costa Rica has historically put a strong emphasis on promoting economic growth with social inclusion, but these policies are threatened by large and persistent fiscal deficits and rising public debt.** The National Development Plan (NDP) 2019-2022 focuses on inclusive and sustainable growth through five key areas of work: Economic growth, Unemployment, Multidimensional poverty, Inequality, and Decarbonization. However, a high deficit is a key challenge for the current administration: it averaged 5.2 percent of GDP between 2010 and 2016, and reached 6.2 percent of GDP in 2017, the highest level observed since 1980. The Government of Costa Rica (GoCR) has made efforts to reduce the deficit and is currently implementing several measures to control the situation. .

Sectoral Institutional Context of the Program

- 3. The prioritization of education in the public agenda and the high level of public expenditure during the last decades made Costa Rica an education leader among LAC.** Public spending on education has been increasing steadily over the last decade, representing 30.5 percent of public expenditure in 2017, the highest in LAC and almost three times the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) average of 11 percent in the same. As a percentage of its GDP, education spending also increased from 4.6 percent in 2007 to 7.4 percent in 2017, which is higher than the regional average of 5.1 percent (2017) and the OECD average of 4.5 percent (2016). Due to these investments, the country was among the first in the region to achieve universal primary school enrollment and ensure all youth and adults have basic literacy skills. Between 2004 and 2014, average education life expectancy increased by three years, compared to 1.1 and 1.2 years, respectively, in OECD and LAC countries; and 47 percent of 25 to 34 year-olds attained at least an upper secondary education in 2014, up from 35 percent among their parents' generation (OECD 2016).
- 4. Despite the progress made in access to basic education,¹ the country has not been able to raise overall learning outcomes, which remain lower than countries with similar GDP per capita.** During the last decade, access to preschool education increased, primary school became universal, and secondary education attainment increased. However, by the end of basic education, 33 percent of Costa Rican students lack core competencies in mathematics, reading and science (OECD 2018). In PISA 2015, Costa Rica's 15-year-olds performed at no more than the average level for LAC and about two years below their peers in OECD countries. Most students also performed at the lowest tercile in the 2010 national assessment in grade 9 in mathematics and sciences. In addition, PISA 2015 shows that while socio-economically

¹ "Basic education" is mandatory and goes from grades 1 to 9, from 7 to 15 years of age. Upper secondary or "Diversified education" includes grades 10 to 11, from 16 to 17 years of age.



advantaged students tend to perform as well as their peers in many OECD countries, disadvantaged students are behind by the equivalent of around two years of schooling. Students in rural schools fall behind in their learning compared to those in urban schools, with small rural primary schools demonstrating the lowest performance rates in the country (PEN 2013). As in most of the region, boys also do worse than girls on all indicators related to enrollment, progression and graduation. Notwithstanding, while girls outperform boys in school, they continue to have poorer career prospects and continue to perform behind boys in learning assessments.²

5. **To ensure the transition from “access for all” to “learning for all,” the GoCR adopted several initiatives with a comprehensive and evidence-based approach that, if well implemented, could help produce a qualitative leap in this direction.** Past investments in programs to improve learning were isolated, contributing to poor service delivery. However, as described in the 2019-2022 NDP, the Ministry of Public Education (*Ministerio de Educación Pública*, MEP) recently began implementing more comprehensive strategic initiatives to improve learning nationwide.

6. **At the core of the reforms to improve learning outcomes is the implementation of the new competency-based curriculum for basic education approved in 2017.** The new curriculum for basic education emphasizes problem solving and critical thinking, which seeks to shift the focus to ensuring students gain higher level skills that are critical to successfully engage in the labor market. This curriculum was recently approved but has not yet implemented. Its implementation requires a coordinated effort to improve important determinants of learning in schools, such as having prepared and motivated teachers, having management and pedagogical practices aligned with well-measured learning outcomes, and providing enough and appropriate resources aligned with effective teaching and learning.

7. **To implement the new curriculum, the GoCR has placed investments for improving teacher practices at the forefront of its agenda.** In-service teacher training, evaluation and feedback, when aligned with appropriate incentives, is an important channel through which teachers may acquire the skills needed to be well-equipped and motivated to become effective teachers. Evidence shows that high-performing education systems have ongoing training programs coupled with the provision of continuous support, feedback and motivation to prepare teachers to implement innovative practices in the classroom (Béteille and Evans, 2018). More specifically, there is evidence that practical, repeated learning opportunities can help teachers improve their practices in the classroom (Popova et al, 2018). Several studies show that coaching and mentoring, as well as detailed guidance, are also an important part of professional development and can help teachers deliver best practices in the classroom. Learning assessments, and particularly the appropriate use of their results, can be effective resources for teachers and have also showed to be critical in creating opportunities for innovation and continuous improvement in the classroom (and ultimately in learning itself), as evidenced in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Tanzania, Germany, and Peru. The GoCR’s investments in teacher professional development, which comprises teacher training, teacher evaluation and incentives, as well as classroom assessment tools and standardized tests, incorporate these best practices.

8. **In addition, the GoCR prioritized the expansion of use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to ensure a more effective, equitable and learning-focused education system.** Overall, several studies suggest that interventions that promote access to technology are effective at increasing the use of computers and improving computer skills, and these findings are persistent across a range of delivery contexts and users from high-capacity to low-capacity settings (see Escueta et al 2017 for a review). An intervention in China providing access to technology via computer distribution, for example, suggests that learning results can be improved if access to technology can be combined with additional digital solutions, such as learning software in the classroom. In fact, there is strong evidence suggesting that

² In PISA 2015, girls performed significantly behind boys in science and mathematics, whereas their advantage in reading, where girls typically do well, was much lower than the OECD average. The fact that more boys who struggle with learning will have dropped out by age 15 is likely to account for part of this performance gap (OECD, 2017).



well-designed learning software (computer-assisted learning technologies) may be able to significantly improve learning outcomes, particularly in mathematics (for example, Muralidharan, Singh, and Ganimian 2018). To take full advantage of access to technology in schools, the NDP prioritized the development of logic and physical infrastructure to ensure connectivity in schools and modernize the education management system through three relevant initiatives:³ a) “Bicentennial network” to ensure connectivity in the schools; ii) a “National Mobile Technology Program” to incorporate the use of mobile technologies in the teaching and learning processes; and a iii) the Ministerial Platform, focused on the modernization of the education management and information system.

9. **Finally, in line with the social inclusion approach, the GoCR has prioritized an increase in the coverage of the “Full Curriculum” in basic education, starting in schools serving the most vulnerable populations.** Overall, studies show positive effects of the impact of full-time schools on students’ academic performance, student graduation rates, and family participation in the labor market, as well as negative effects on social outcomes such as student pregnancy rates and criminal conviction rates, as evidenced by several studies in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay, and Mexico. Interestingly, the case of the *Escuelas de Tiempo Completo* in Mexico shows that when well-targeted to more disadvantaged schools and students, the positive effect of introducing extended school days can be even larger (Silveyra et al 2018). Costa Rica’s “Full Curriculum” comprises a full day school system that complements core disciplines (Math, Science, Social Sciences, etc.) with Arts, Sports, and foreign languages, among others. Despite the introduction of the Full Curriculum in basic education being established by law in 1997, only 7 percent (264 of the 3,730) of schools (mostly in rich areas) are currently implementing it. The slow implementation has been driven by a lack of prepared teachers, school infrastructure, and/or school supplies, which particularly affect schools located in poor, rural areas. Given that these differences among schools increase the learning gap between the richest and the poorest schools, a gradual and targeted expansion of schools offering the Full Curriculum would help reduce learning gaps in the country.

Relationship to CAS/CPF

10. **The proposed Program is aligned with Pillar 1: Reducing Constraints to Productive Inclusion of the Costa Rica Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the period FY16-FY20.** The Program would support the implementation of evidence-based approaches to address critical drivers of education outcomes, ensuring that students— especially those in vulnerable situations – gain higher level skills that are critical to successfully engage in the labor market and to become productive members of society.

Rationale for Bank Engagement and Choice of Financing Instrument

11. **Rationale for Bank Engagement.** The main reason for the Bank to engage in the proposed operation is consistent with the Bank’s twin goals of eliminating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity by supporting programs targeted towards vulnerable populations. The Program would support the interventions identified in the NDP for 2019-2022, which focuses on fostering social inclusion and improving education quality. To this end, the Bank is well-positioned to respond rapidly to the GoCR’s request for support by drawing on international best practices, building evidence-based interventions, and incorporating lessons learned from previous operations in the country.

12. **In addition, the Program would support key actions for Costa Rica’s accession to the OECD, for which negotiations initiated in 2015.** As part of this process, Costa Rica has conducted a series of in-depth evaluations in all relevant areas of the OECD’s work, including a comprehensive study of the education system from early childhood to

³ As part of preparation activities, the Bank facilitated a knowledge exchange visit to the Ekstep Foundation in India. The team, together with a delegation responsible for this Program, traveled to India for a week in June 2019 to build a digital infrastructure prototype that will allow digital resources to be developed to improve both pedagogical and managerial practices in the classroom.



higher education. The 2018 OECD Report “Basic Education in Costa Rica: From Access to Learning for All” provides an assessment of the education system in relation to the best policies and practices of the OECD and other Latin American countries. The report highlights three important areas for action that are relevant for this Program: (i) a strong focus on improving learning outcomes; (ii) equity in educational opportunity; and (iii) the ability to collect and use data to inform policy. In these particular areas, the Bank’s vast experience on teacher professional development and improving information management systems, evaluation and decision-making in the education sector can be a great value added, drawing from international experience and best practices to improve government systems.

13. **Choice of Instrument.** The Program for Results (PforR) was deemed the best option to support the GoCR’s program given that it would allow a focus on development results, making use of the targets already established in the NDP while strengthening national institutions responsible for the education sector, which is a key action identified in the OECD Report. In exploring this option, the Bank concluded that (i) there is a strong national commitment for the NDP initiatives to be supported, with strong local leadership; (ii) the expected results are well-defined; and (iii) national technical, fiduciary, environmental and social systems seem adequate to support the program. The PforR instrument would also facilitate harmonization with other donors that are actively engaged in the sector, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), as it would allow the use of a common results framework and reduce transaction costs for the client.

C. Program Development Objective(s) (PDO) and PDO Level Results Indicators

Program Development Objective(s)

14. The objective of the Program is to improve teaching and learning environments in basic education, with an emphasis on public schools serving the most vulnerable populations.

PDO Level Results Indicators

15. The expected Project Development Objective outcome indicators are:

- Teachers trained on the use of the new curriculum
- Teachers evaluated
- Schools with digital resources effectively used
- Schools with the full-time curriculum implemented
- Schools that implement improvement plans based on the results of learning assessments

D. Program Description

PforR Program Boundary

16. **Policy Context.** The Program is aligned with the NDP 2019–2022, which contemplates 5 national goals: (i) Economic growth; (ii) Unemployment; (iii) Multidimensional poverty; (iv) Inequality and (v) Decarbonization.

17. **The PforR Program Scope.** The proposed PforR would support a subset of activities detailed in the NDP chapter: Education for Sustainable Development and Social Harmony (*Educación para el desarrollo sostenible y la convivencia*), which highlights 14 public investment projects to improve access and quality for all. The NDP initiatives supported under this Program would be: (i) improve the quality of education through teacher training and evaluation in alignment with the new curriculum; (ii) provide high quality internet connection to educational centers through the Bicentennial Education



Network; (iii) expand the implementation of the Ministerial Platform; and (iv) support the expansion of schools offering the Full Curriculum. According to the NDP, the interventions planned to meet the targets in these areas represent a total investment of approximately US\$1.39 billion for the period 2019-2023.

Results Area 1. Improve Teacher Development and Pedagogical Practices

18. **The NDP aims to improve the quality of education through training and evaluation of teacher performance, as well as by promoting the use of learning assessments to improve pedagogical practices.** In line with this objective, the GoCR recently announced a strategic investment in teacher professional development⁴ with three main components: in-service training, evaluation, and incentives. The teacher training program aims to expand and improve the coverage and quality of the ongoing training courses following the new curriculum. The teacher performance evaluation program aims to strengthen high quality teaching through activities that provide monitoring, evaluation and regular feedback to teachers. The teacher incentives program aims to revise the current system of incentives embedded in the teacher compensation scheme to better align them with teaching and learning.⁵ In addition, the MEP announced the development and implementation of a new National Learning Assessment System (*Fortalecimiento de Aprendizajes para la Renovación de Oportunidades, Pruebas FARO*). These assessments will be aligned with the new curriculum and measure learning outcomes for all students in grade 5 (one year before the end of primary education) and grades 10/11 (one year before the end of upper secondary education) in Spanish, Math, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences, and will put a stronger emphasis on measuring higher order skills than on memorizing facts. The results will also be used to monitor education quality and support teaching and learning at the school, regional and national level.

19. **The Bank's Program would support the expansion and strengthening of the program for teacher training; the redesign, validation, and implementation of the teacher evaluation program; and its alignment with a revised teacher career incentive program.** For teacher training, the Bank would support the (i) development of an evidence-based professional development plan for teachers; (ii) preparation and validation of a range of modalities of teacher training; (iii) expansion and training of mentor teacher network; (iv) implementation of monitoring mechanisms to ensure learnings are translated into the classroom; and (v) improvement of existing training centers and conference rooms.⁶ For teacher evaluation, the Bank would support the (i) preparation, validation, and approval of teacher evaluation instruments; (ii) initial implementation of the new teacher evaluation systems (including training of teaching and managerial staff at schools and administrative staff at MEP); and (iii) implementation of monitoring mechanisms to ensure the results of the evaluations inform the design of teacher training courses.

20. **The Bank's Program would also support two main features of the new evaluation system: tools for classroom assessment of learning levels and the *Pruebas FARO* for primary and secondary education.** First, the introduction of classroom assessment tools and practices would provide teachers with the skills and pedagogical resources needed to identify and remediate learning deficiencies, monitor progress, and support student learning according to the skills stated in the new curriculum. Second, the Program would support the Directorate for Management and Evaluation of Quality's (*Dirección de Gestión y Evaluación de la Calidad, DGEC*) implementation of the *Pruebas Faro* for basic and secondary education.

⁴ Teacher professional development focuses on the in-service stage of the teacher career framework (which is under MEP's responsibility). Pre-service training is provided by autonomous Universities, while hiring and allocation of teachers are the responsibility of the General Directorate of Civil Service (unit outside MEP).

⁵ Teachers' compensation includes their basic salary, annuities based on years of service, surcharges (overtime pay for other activities), and incentives (professional career, annual increases, location of school and others). Teacher remuneration has significantly improved in recent years, putting teacher salaries in Costa Rica roughly on a par with those of comparable Costa Rican professionals (Mizala and Ñopo, 2012).

⁶ All in-service training is the responsibility of the Professional Development Institute Uladislao Gamez Solano (under the Academic Vice-Ministry).



Results Area 2. Improve the Use of Digital Resources

21. **According to the NDP, the use of Digital resources for education will be improved through two complementary programs: the Bicentennial Network and the Ministerial Platform.** The Bicentennial Network aims to organize and improve existing connectivity, as well as create new connectivity in 4,650 schools to promote efficient and sustainable collaboration between schools, communities, and the MEP. Meanwhile, the Ministerial Platform aims to build a digital infrastructure and integrate existing information systems, combining pedagogical areas with administrative operations to improve service delivery and monitor the implementation of education programs and policies at the school level.

22. **The Bank's Program would support several key features to improve the conceptual design, development and implementation of the Bicentennial Network and the Ministerial Platform.** In terms of the Bicentennial Network, the Bank would support the (i) conceptual design of the network; (ii) development of tools and guidelines for its management; and (iii) development of digital content tailored to the characteristics of each school, its population, and its specific pedagogical model. For the Ministerial Platform, the activities to be supported by the Bank would be (i) support of a Data Center; (ii) conceptual design of each block of the digital infrastructure; (iii) development of terms of reference, guidelines, and requirements to outsource the development of blocks to external actors/private sector; and (iv) implementation and integration of each block into the MEP's digital infrastructure. In addition, the Bank would support institutional strengthening of the MEP to manage these two programs.

Results Area 3. Support the Full Curriculum in Schools in Vulnerable Areas

23. **The NDP aims to increase coverage of the full basic education curriculum, consisting of a full day program that includes 13 subjects to be completed in 43 lessons per week.** The GoCR plans to increase the number of schools that implement the Full Curriculum from 264 to 1,000 out of 3,730 by 2022 (from 7 percent to 27 percent). The MEP will provide schools with the required administrative and pedagogical staff, infrastructure, and equipment to ensure that they offer the curriculum.

24. **The Bank's Program would support the MEP's implementation of the Full Curriculum in a targeted group of schools serving the most disadvantaged students.** This would mainly include support to pedagogical improvements, expansion and/or rehabilitation of school infrastructure, equipment and supplies. The schools to be strengthened will be targeted on the basis of socio-economic background, learning outcomes, and key education indicators such as enrollment or retention rates.

E. Initial Environmental and Social Screening

25. The proposed Program as described at concept stage will mainly consist of training and capacity-building activities to strengthen the education system in Costa Rica. The main environmental impacts and risks are related to infrastructure activities for the rehabilitation, expansion and equipment of educational centers (Results Area 3), and the expansion of the digital infrastructure network for educational centers at the national level (Results Area 2). Based on a preliminary assessment of existing laws, regulations and organizational structures, the Borrower's capacity is broadly expected to be adequate to manage the anticipated environmental and social risks under this Program. However, specific roles and responsibilities for environmental and social management for this Program remain unclear. Based on the information currently available, the Program is expected to have only positive impacts on vulnerable people, including indigenous peoples and afro-descendants. The Program does not include activities that are expected to have significant adverse impacts that are sensitive, diverse or unprecedented on the environment and/or affected people, and the Program design



will avoid such activities.

Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA)

26. The Bank will conduct, consult, and disclose prior to appraisal an ESSA for the proposed Program, as per the Bank Policy for Program for Results Financing. ESSA preparation will include close engagement with national-level indigenous, afro-descendant, and disabilities organizations working with education, as well as consultations with other stakeholders. The ESSA will review the relevant existing regulations and policies applicable to Program activities, the institutional capacity of the implementing agency and any other institution involved in the execution of the activities supported by the Program, and the effectiveness and track record of implementation in practice.

27. The ESSA will provide specific recommendations to enhance social inclusion and environmental and social management capacity and performance, which will be discussed and agreed with the Borrower. Based on the ESSA’s recommendations, an action plan to ensure appropriate Borrower systems on environmental and social management will be developed and included within the Program if required. The actions outlined in the ESSA may also be included in the Program Action Plan (PAP).

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