



## 1. Project Data

**Project ID**  
P121779

**Project Name**  
NI Social Protection

**Country**  
Nicaragua

**Practice Area(Lead)**  
Social Protection & Labor

**L/C/TF Number(s)**  
IDA-48620,TF-10216

**Closing Date (Original)**  
30-Sep-2015

**Total Project Cost (USD)**  
19,500,000.00

**Bank Approval Date**  
03-Feb-2011

**Closing Date (Actual)**  
30-Jun-2017

	<b>IBRD/IDA (USD)</b>	<b>Grants (USD)</b>
Original Commitment	19,500,000.00	2,750,000.00
Revised Commitment	19,469,277.83	2,548,569.99
Actual	18,564,768.25	2,548,569.99

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## 2. Project Objectives and Components

### a. Objectives

The objectives of the project were to: (1) improve the basic conditions of welfare and social well-being of extremely poor beneficiary families with children in Selected Poor Localities; (2) strengthen the capacity of Ministry of the Family, Youth and Children (MIFAN) to implement the family and community-based social welfare Model; and (3) promote pre-school and primary school attendance through the provision of school lunches. The project objectives were not revised during implementation; however, the targets for two out of six outcome indicators were modified. One target was increased and another was lowered. Consequently, the ICR applied a split rating. However, given that in both cases the original and the revised targets were



achieved, IEG does not deem a split evaluation to be necessary in this case, and this ICR Review does not apply a split.

**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**

01-Apr-2015

**c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?**

No

**d. Components**

The intervention was structured around three components, each related to one of the project's objectives. The core of the project lies in component 1 and 2, the third component having been added at the request of the government in a time of resource constraints to fund the continuation of the national school feeding program.

The **first component** (original: US\$11.3 million; actual: US\$9.4 million) sought to improve the basic social well-being of extremely poor families in 26 municipalities through the delivery of a package of services to poor families, known as the "New Model". This package included community-based education workshops, family counseling, referral and counter-referral, and a grant. This component was to integrate some technical assistance to MIFAN to revise and improve the curriculum of the family workshops, comprising a series of twelve workshops on a range of topics from nutrition and sanitation to children's education. This component was also to fund the rollout of individual family counseling. Participant families with children out of school, working, or disabled were to receive a visit from a social worker and come up with an Individual Family Plan to ensure the return of the child to school and avoid dropout. Finally, this component was to fund monthly Family grants of US\$20 for a period of two years, conditional on a parent attending regularly a community-based educational workshop.

The **second component** (original: US\$3.7 million; actual: US\$4.8 million) focused on the second project objective of strengthening MIFAN's capacity to develop, own, and roll out nationwide a new model of assistance to extremely poor families. The component was to fund technical assistance to the ministry to develop and implement a unified family and community-based social welfare model, administer a management information system (MIS), and coordinate and monitor delivery of the various features of the model at the central, regional, and local levels. This component was to include training of ministry personnel and a certification program for local social promoters, as well as funding for a project impact evaluation and fiduciary audits.

The **third component** (original: US\$4.5 million; actual: US\$4.3 million) was to support the existing national



Integral School Feeding Program by purchasing food and funding the distribution of school lunches in pre-schools and primary schools in the 26 targeted municipalities for 110 school-days over two semesters (between 2011-2012).

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

**Project Cost:** The original project cost at approval was estimated at US\$19.5 million. At closing the project had disbursed US\$18.5 million (95% of the approved budget). The project disbursed 17% less than anticipated on the first component for direct support to families, and 30% more on the second component for capacity-building to the ministry. The ICR notes that the project was affected by a loss in project finances related to important exchange rate fluctuations (ICR, p. 10, footnote 9).

**Financing and Borrower Contribution:** The project was financed through funding from the International Development Association (original: US\$19.5 million; actual: US\$18.56 million) and a Trust Fund (original: US\$2.75 million; actual: US\$2.55 million), with no borrower contribution or non-World Bank financing.

**Dates:**

- The project was approved in February 2011 and effective in July 2011.
- There were two restructurings: the first in April 2015 with changes to the results framework and loan closing dates, and reallocation of funding between disbursement categories; and the second in March 2017 to extend the closing date. The ICR explained that the first project extension was due to significant delays in identifying a proper financial agency to deliver the family grants (ICR, p. 9, footnote 4) and the second extension because of the need to complete the impact evaluation and the economic assessment.
- The closing date was extended from the originally planned September 2015 to June 2017.

### 3. Relevance of Objectives

#### Rationale

At design, a configuration of four factors justified the project's objectives. First, based on the latest census data available at the time (2005), an estimated 100,000 families living in extreme poverty in rural areas had at least one child who was either working, not going to school, or disabled, thus considered "at risk". Second, among these, about 20% of families cited pecuniary hardship, such as the inability to buy uniforms or pay transportation, as the most common reason for children being out of school. Third, an evaluation of MIFAN, commissioned by the Presidency, revealed major fragmentation in how the ministry delivered services to poor families, with a piecemeal approach driven by individual donors' models. To remedy this fragmentation,



MIFAN decided to embark upon a major reform of its organization and operation, and requested the Bank's support to implement a unified and standardized Model of Attention for Children at Risk and services to extremely poor families. In addition to this core building block, the government requested financial support for its national school feeding program in a time of fiscal duress, which was added as a third component.

The project's objective remained well aligned with the 2013-2017 Country Partnership Framework and relevant through closing in light of updated data presented in the 2017 Systematic Country Diagnostic (pp. 73-77). Specifically, inequalities in enrollment and completion rates of education are persistent between rural and urban areas, and between the bottom quintile and the rest of the population. Moreover, the probability of finishing primary education remains deeply unequal in Nicaragua compared to other countries in the region, with a tight association between the probability of completing primary school and parental education.

### **Rating**

Substantial

## **4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)**

### **Objective 1**

#### **Objective**

Improve the basic conditions of welfare and social well-being of extremely poor beneficiary families with children in Selected Poor Localities

#### **Rationale**

The project sought to influence the behavior of extremely poor families to enhance primary school attendance in poor communities. Through a combination of community-based education workshops, personal counseling, cross-referrals to other social services, and grant money, the project's theory of change sought to incentivize, educate, and support families whose children were either not attending school or working.

The project originally targeted 20,000 extremely poor families with children 0-12 years old in 26 municipalities in 6 departments. This target was lowered to 19,000 at restructuring because of a loss in project financing due to significant currency fluctuations (ICR, p. 10, footnote 9). To select the 6 departments, 26 municipalities, and localities, needs were ranked based on two main criteria: the rate of extreme poverty, and the percentage of children under 13 who were not attending primary school and/or were working. According to the project team, this data collection was done with a very simple form in 2012 that was sufficient for targeting purposes but insufficient as a proper baseline for the outcome indicators of the results framework. Within localities, no distinction of income or status of children was made, as all families with children aged 0-13 were eligible for the transfer.

#### **Outputs**

- By completion, 18,916 families had received at least one transfer payment (ICR, p. 10, footnote 11), and



17,992 families had attended at least 80% of the workshops and received one transfer, thereby graduating from the program. The project therefore met 94.7% of the revised target.

- The family counseling program targeted the most in need and reached 80.61% of all of the participating families. All the families enrolled in the family counseling program had their initial results assessed by a social worker and committed to a family improvement plan, which exceeded the target of 70%.
- 80% of the enrolled families received counseling visits in accordance with the frequency established in the program's methodology (meeting the target). Among these, through beneficiary surveys conducted by the project, almost all participating families (98.58%) expressed satisfaction with the social workers' services.

### Outcomes

- According to the ICR, 95.26% of the families whose children had not been attending school at the start of the project were attending at the time the project closed, which met the revised target of 95%. Additional information provided by the project team showed that 5,043 families out of the 5,295 families with children out of school were positively affected.
- Moreover, the impact evaluation (IE) showed that participating in the program increased the probability of children (aged 10-13 at the start, and 12-15 at the end) attending school by 5.6 percentage points. The IEG validator reviewed the IE and found it to uphold good standards of quasi-experimental design using a pattern-matching design. The IE successfully identified a comparison group of municipalities that did not receive grants, and did not benefit from the new Model of services, until after project closure. While the sample size of the IE was relatively small, which may have affected the statistical significance of certain indicators, it yielded interesting and valid results about the short-term outcome of the project.
- In addition, according to the results framework reported in the ICR, 90.64% of the children were promoted, meeting the target. The project team provided additional information on the indicator: it was 74% when it was first measured in 2015, and 19,019 out of 20,983 children (90.64%) were promoted to the next grade when it was last measured in 2017.
- Based on information provided in the results framework section of the ICR, 89% of the families reached by the program improved their basic conditions of social welfare and well-being (which almost meets the target). The project team explained that this indicator captured whether families had improved on at least three of four main categories of well-being. The IE (p. 40) found that the project had statistically significantly improved health and nutrition, but had no effect on hygiene, use of family planning, or perception of violence. On the other hand, the evidence on the effect on children's poverty included in the ICR did not provide a sufficiently credible basis to attribute poverty outcomes to the project. Given that this was not an explicit objective of the project, this insufficient evidence does not affect the efficacy rating for this objective.

**Rating**  
Substantial



## **Objective 2**

### **Objective**

Strengthen the capacity of MIFAN to implement the family and community-based social welfare Model

### **Rationale**

In addition to the direct support to families through transfers, social counseling, and educational workshops, the project's theory of change also included measures to improve the supply of social services to enhance the capacity of the ministry in delivering a new Model of social protection nation-wide. The project notably focused on funding municipal service maps to increase the coherence of available services and better-informed users, as well as on strengthening the oversight of services delivered by improving Monitoring and Information Systems and enhancing ministerial staff capacity in project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). A less explicit, but equally important, part of this component was to help MIFAN better plan and organize its delivery model, empowering the ministry to be in the driving seat of its policy, avoid fragmentation, and better align other ministries and donors to this effort. The "new Model" included a strong element of referencing and cross-referencing of social services at the community level, which required inter-ministerial collaboration.

### Outputs:

- At closing, all the targeted municipalities had local services mapped and updated, meeting the target.
- Eleven modules were created for the MIS and shared with three institutions, meeting the revised target.
- A grievance redress mechanism was put in place, and 94 percent of complaints and appeals were resolved according to pre-defined standards, exceeding the target.
- The totality of payment points were set up for family grants and were audited at least once a year, exceeding the target.
- 192 technical specialists were certified as trainers on the new Model, exceeding the target of 100.
- The number of MIFAN staff social promoters trained on the new Model reached 899, which was above the revised target of 700, but excluded other trained promoters who were not government staff and were originally targeted by the project.

### Outcomes:

- Outcome was assessed by measuring the uptake of local services and programs by families in the selected localities. The results framework section indicated that 98.29% of families used at least one social service (excluding school or health centers). The project team provided additional information regarding the baseline for this indicator, which was first measured in 2014 with 89% of the 10,500 enrolled families using public services at the time. The latest measurement showed that 98.29% of the 19,000 families enrolled at closing used public services, which indicated that the reference and counter-reference system worked.
- The outcome was also measured by an indicator of completeness of the MIS at the national level, with



100% of beneficiaries of MIFAN's programs enrolled in the ministry's MIS (thereby achieving the target). Complementary information provided by the project team indicated that all of the 69,744 families registered in one of the MIFAN programs were entered in the MIS.

- Finally, the coverage of the ministry's new Model reached 100% of the targeted 26 municipalities and was then rolled out country-wide to all 153 municipalities (without the grant component) during the lifetime of the project (ICR, p. 31 comments).
- While not part of the results framework, there was evidence that the project led to substantial institutional strengthening of MIFAN and increased capacity to coordinate donors around a well-defined single Model with a high degree of national ownership. While before the program the four main donors involved in social protection in the country (Japan International Cooperation Agency, Inter-American Development Bank, United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Bank) funded various models, as of the end of the project, these donors had committed to funding the single Model and underlying systems that had crystalized through the project.

### **Rating**

Substantial

## **Objective 3**

### **Objective**

Promote pre-school and primary school attendance through the provision of school lunches

### **Rationale**

Nicaragua has had an Integrated School Feeding Program for many years. One of the rationales for providing free lunch through this project was to increase attendance in school and combat stunting. The government asked for the Bank's financial support at a time of budget tightness, and a third component was added to project design to accommodate this need.

### Outputs

The project provided funding to the existing national free lunch program in the 26 targeted municipalities, funding 261,367 lunches for 110 school days of lunches, exceeding the set target.

### Outcomes

- According to the results framework, the retention rate in public preschool and primary schools was 80% at baseline and increased by 15 percentage points to 95% in 2015, which was above the set target of 85%.
- In addition, the IE showed that participating in the program reduced the probability of child labor of children aged 6 to 14 by 6.6 percentage points (although the difference was only statistically significant for children aged 6 to 9). However, it is unlikely that the effect can be attributed to school lunches alone, but



rather to the full package of interventions as well as other contributing factors.

### Rating

Substantial

### Rationale

The theory of change underlying the project focused on building MIFAN's capacity to develop, pilot test, and roll out nationally a single Model of assistance to very poor families with children at risk. The first objective of the project was to improve the well-being of extremely poor families in the 26 municipalities, where the new Model was pilot-tested along with a cash transfer component. The second part of the theory of change consisted of building the capacity and systems of the ministry to be able to deliver and monitor the new Model nation-wide. Results indicators at the output and intermediate outcome level were reasonable measurements of success and achieved. Most targets were met or exceeded. Moreover, a robust impact evaluation showed positive findings on immediate outcomes, strengthening the plausibility of the causal contribution of the project to improvement in well-being and efficacy of services delivered by the ministry personnel at the local level. An efficacy rating of Substantial is therefore supported.

### Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

## 5. Efficiency

The ICR builds its efficiency argument around the cost-effectiveness of the project, relying on the efficiency analysis presented in Appendix 2. The discrepancy between the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) at the PAD and at the ICR stage is significant and can be explained by the fact that the PAD took a conservative approach with a lower-bound estimate, whereas the ICR presented an upper-bound estimate based on generous assumptions of success. At design, the ERR was computed based on the estimation of two benefits of the project: a direct income effect from the transfer to low-income households, and an indirect effect on human capital accumulation through the increase in the educational attendance of children of participating families. The ICR modified the model by changing underlying assumptions and by adding several benefits to the benefit stream of the ex-ante analysis, including contribution of volunteer workers and changes in parenting skills. However, the evidence base underlying the ex-post efficiency analysis was weak, casting doubt on the sharp increase in the ERR. Nevertheless, the efficiency of the project remained substantial, albeit not as outstanding as the economic analysis stated, for the following reasons:

- The **effect on extreme poverty headcount** attributable to the direct cash transfer in the *ex ante* analysis was 0.9% if 20,000 families received cash, and 3.5% if all eligible families in the 26 municipalities received



the transfer (PAD, p. 73). In turn, the ICR simulation estimated the poverty reduction attributable to the project to be 4%, although only 18,916 families received at least one payment. This estimation was made by assuming that all families in the Central and Pacific regions with children under the age of 14 years received the transfer of money, which is a fallacious assumption in view of the empirical data provided by the project. In addition, the economic analysis (ICR, p. 56) wrongly attributed consumption increases at the regional level to the multiplier and spillover effects of the transfer in 26 municipalities, when these increases were much more likely to have been a sign of a more general trend, independent of the project.

- The PAD predicted the project's **indirect short-term impact on human capital** to be an increase of 2 percentage points (from 80% to 82%) in overall enrollment and 6 percentage points of children attending school exclusively (and not working). The ICR provided different measures of human capital, instead focusing on the reduction in child labor, which it found to be 6.6 percentage points. The IE cited as source of information (p. 56, paragraph 18) in fact found a statistically significant reduction in child labor only for children between 6 and 9 (IE, p. 37, table 5).
- The PAD predicted the project's **long-term effect on return to education** in the six targeted departments to range between US\$ 4million and US\$12 million (PAD, p.77), whereas the ICR stated that the private benefits over 40 years would be US\$ 21 million using a social rate of return of 8% when the estimation based on Living Standards Measurement Study data was 4% (ICR, p.61), and an additional wage of US\$ 33 without supporting evidence.

In addition to benefits assessed in the PAD, the ICR added several benefits from the project, with an evidence base and set of assumptions that were equally weak:

- The ICR's economic analysis (p. 58) argued that the project increased the efficiency of public spending in education, asserting that approximately 36,701 students may not have come into the system had the project not been implemented, which is a strong attribution not supported by the IE's evidence. Moreover, the ICR argued that an increase in enrollment, without increase in public resources, inevitably would lead to a positive increase in efficiency, without accounting for the probable decrease in quality of education services, which would then negatively affect the long-term benefit of positive return to education claimed by the project.
- The ICR stated that the project can be credited with an increase in exclusive breastfeeding of 10 percentage points, but the IE showed that this effect was not statistically significant (IE, p. 37 table 5, and p. 38)

The ICR also stated that the project's efficiency stemmed (at least in part) from using volunteers and saving the NPV equivalent of US\$1.4 million. However, the analysis did not take into account the opportunity cost for volunteers in terms of foregone income.

Finally, from an implementation efficiency point of view, there were delays in operation due to design elements that led to implementation issues. First, there were some delays due to the unforeseen necessity to provide identity cards to grant recipients. Second, it took three bidding procedures to identify financial agents



equipped to disburse to families in the targeted municipalities. Ultimately two financial agents were awarded the contract, which was also a source of inefficiency. Third, there were some delays and inefficiencies in collecting baseline information, which could have been avoided had the data collection done in 2012 to identify eligible families been better structured to collect information on the indicators of the results framework. Overall, however, these were relatively minor shortcomings, and overall Efficiency is rated Substantial.

## Efficiency Rating

Substantial

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	✓	4.50	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate	✓	39.30	100.00 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

## 6. Outcome

Relevance of objectives is rated substantial. The project addressed a core priority of the government of Nicaragua, which was to roll out a new Model for providing social services to the extreme poor and address lingering inequalities in access and retention in primary education. Achievement of the first objective is rated substantial, as the Model was successfully rolled out in the targeted municipalities with early evidence of outcomes on measures of well-being. Achievement of the second objective is rated substantial, as the MIS system was in place as of the end of the project, and substantial capacity-building took place, with early signs of institutionalization of the new Model at the national level. Achievement of the third objective is also rated substantial. Project efficiency is rated substantial, due to the large number of beneficiaries reached and the rollout of the Model nation-wide, and despite the increased length in the project duration. Taken together, these ratings are indicative of minor shortcomings in the project's preparation and implementation, and therefore an Outcome rating of Satisfactory.

### a. Outcome Rating

Satisfactory

## 7. Risk to Development Outcome



On the one hand, at the time of the ICR there were a number of encouraging signs of institutionalization of the new Model by the government and replication of the approach in several other municipalities, including the model of referral and counter-referral, with a good likelihood of maintaining the benefits stemming from the second component. In addition, there were positive signs of alignment of donors around the MIFAN's Model. Moreover, the ministry had managed to secure funding for the school feeding project for an additional three years, and was considered likely to maintain the benefits from the third component of the project. On the other hand, the government could not sustain the family grant, which was one of the pivotal mechanisms of behavior change and the most direct way to affect poverty reduction as claimed in the economic analysis, thereby possibly jeopardizing the benefits achieved by the project's first component.

## **8. Assessment of Bank Performance**

### **a. Quality-at-Entry**

The project design was informed by prior experience in Nicaragua as well as other examples of behavioral change strategies applied to hybrid Conditional Cash Transfer programs. In addition, it was well aligned with the country's priorities and anchored in existing government initiatives (such as the school feeding program and the new Model of assistance to the extreme poor). The Bank preparatory work and dialogue to plan for the definition and roll out of the model was adequate and started several years before the official start of the project. Notably, the Bank used an institutional assessment of the ministry, carried out by the Office of the Presidency to identify institutional weaknesses and leveraged additional financing through a Recipient-Executed Grant (TF 010216) to provide capacity-building support, including to procurement counterparts, prior to the Project launch.

However, there were moderate shortcomings in the preparation of the program, most notably with regards to the design of the results framework and the planning of other M&E arrangements. The absence of baseline data, issues with the definition and specificity of the results framework indicators, and the timing of the impact evaluation, are among the shortcomings (see section 9a).

### **Quality-at-Entry Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

### **b. Quality of supervision**

Despite issues with the design and complex procurement processes, the Bank, through close supervision and collaboration with the ministry, managed to overcome implementation challenges. When a need for further capacity strengthening was identified, the Bank's team managed to mobilize additional expertise or technical assistance. The Bank reacted quickly to try to overcome the bottleneck and scarcity of financial agents for grant disbursements, by launching consecutive bidding processes. The supervision of the Indigenous People Plan was done carefully with due incorporation of specific modules in the training material. In addition, the continuity of the TTL and staff from the World Bank enabled a close collaboration with the Government throughout the project life cycle.



### **Quality of Supervision Rating**

Satisfactory

### **Overall Bank Performance Rating**

Moderately Satisfactory

## **9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization**

### **a. M&E Design**

The design of the project's M&E framework positively emphasized ownership by MIFAN. It included technical assistance and resources to support MIFAN to redesign and implement a comprehensive MIS and to ensure appropriate data collection and analysis throughout the project cycle. Moreover, the project funded an impact evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the innovative Model focused on behavioral change. However, there were a number of significant shortcomings in the M&E design. First, the impact evaluation was planned to start too late (2015) to ensure proper randomization and had challenges identifying a proper control group, having to resort to a less rigorous design than optimal. Second, the results framework had too many indicators, no baseline at design for most indicators, and several indicators formulated in a way that was neither specific nor measurable, in the sense that they did not properly convey a measure of progress. For example, the main indicator used to capture the second objective, "percentage of families who are using local services and programs in selected localities," did not specify which services and which localities. Finally, for many indicators the denominator was not clear. For example, the "percentage of municipalities where MIFAN is implementing the new Model" does not specify whether the denominator is the total number of municipalities in the country or the number of municipalities targeted by the project.

### **b. M&E Implementation**

The project managed to improve the reliability and coverage of the ministry's MIS (called SIGRUP) and to ensure the interconnectivity of the platform with the Ministry of Health. Moreover, some of the design issues were addressed during implementation. Some baseline information was collected in 2014, and during restructuring the formulation of results indicators was amended to become more specific and measurable. In addition, the ICR reports that several evaluative studies were successfully carried out throughout the life of the project, ranging from process evaluation as a source of information for the scale-up of the approach, to a quasi-experimental impact evaluation. The ministry also undertook a qualitative inquiry to gather family testimonials.

### **c. M&E Utilization**

The evidence collected through the various monitoring and evaluative inquiries was used to make adjustments to project implementation. For example, the ICR explained that the qualitative insight collected through the family testimonials enabled the project team to adjust the content and delivery of educational workshops, better serving the needs of the participants. The results of the quantitative IE were expected to



continue to inform the deployment of the new Model after the project closed.

## **M&E Quality Rating**

Substantial

## **10. Other Issues**

### **a. Safeguards**

At appraisal, the environmental category of the project was C and it did not trigger land acquisition, resettlement, or environmental safeguards. The project triggered the Indigenous People safeguard (OP 4.10), and an Indigenous People Plan (IPP) was developed and implemented (ICR, p. 22). Abiding by Bank policy, the IPP was disclosed on the MIFAN and Bank websites in December 2010. There were 940 families who self-identified as indigenous in 8 of the 26 targeted municipalities. The main risk identified by the Bank's social specialist was the loss of cultural identity. This risk was mitigated by the project through two main channels. First, the Model was adapted to consider specific culinary practices, traditions, and values pertinent to the behavioral model of the project. An additional module was added to the workshop curriculum. Second, the ministry made some institutional changes to ensure its capacity to mitigate social risks incurred by indigenous families, such as hiring personnel who spoke the three main languages of Miskito, Creole, and Mayagna and translating the model into these languages. Overall, there was compliance with safeguards policy.

### **b. Fiduciary Compliance**

#### **Procurement**

The procurement risk was rated as Substantial at the outset of the project due to weak capacity within the ministry's division of procurement. The main weakness reported in the ICR has to do with bidding procedures, notably regarding the purchase of food, the contracting out of school lunches, and the procurement of family grants. The ICR reports additional training and technical assistance delivered by the Bank's team to strengthen the ministry's capacity, including by hiring two financial agents.

#### **Financial Management**

The rating for financial management oscillated between moderately unsatisfactory and satisfactory throughout the project's life. Initially, ratings were low due to low and rotating capacity within the ministry and delays in identifying the right financial institutions to carry out payments of family grants. The project ended up contracting two different payment agents, one for 5 departments and another for the remaining department. The external auditors provided reports on time. The 2014 report emitted a qualified opinion due to a discrepancy in project expenditure that the ICR attributes to exchange rate differences (p. 23). The 2015 report was unqualified, and the latest audit was pending at the time of the ICR, but the project team confirmed receipt of an audit in 2017 with no qualification.



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

No negative unintended impact was reported. There was one unforeseen positive outcome, measurable and somewhat attributable to project activities, was the delivery of birth certificates, national identity or voting cards, and vaccination cards. The need to update or deliver proper identification to the poorest individuals emerged as a byproduct of meeting the conditionalities to obtain the family grant.

### d. Other

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## 11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	---
Bank Performance	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	Bank Performance at design is rated Moderately Satisfactory
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	---
Quality of ICR		Substantial	---

## 12. Lessons

From an evaluative standpoint, one main lesson emerges from this review: although social protection projects measure outcome at the beneficiaries' level, the main added value of the Bank's intervention tends to lie at the delivery systems level, which is harder to measure and to capture in an evaluation. The Bank's comparative advantage stems from embedded institution and capacity-building within its operations and working at a systems level. Developing single models, building MIS that can unify scattered registries of various programs into one system, and supporting the planning and monitoring function at the central and decentralized levels are among the most important contributions of this type of intervention.

The ICR also emphasizes two important lessons (among others listed in the document):

1. Having a single unified registry of beneficiaries can be central to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection services delivery. A single registry can be used to identify current and potential beneficiaries and serve as a single mechanism to select/target families for key social protection services. Unifying information into a single registry can help overcome fragmentation and dispersion of information across various programs within one ministry. If done well, it can also serve as a multi-ministerial platform to



support referral and counter-referral systems for services that are overseen by various governmental entities, a significant source of efficiency.

2. Inter-ministerial collaboration is fundamental for the successful implementation of this type of system-wide social protection project. At the community level, working across ministries to provide a range of essential services to extremely poor families requires a high level of inter-ministerial collaboration that can be aided by a process of mapping of social actors and social services, as well a system for receiving demands from the population and channeling them to the appropriate government agency.

### 13. Assessment Recommended?

No

### 14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was overall well written and complete. It usefully attempted to bring evidence from various sources, including the project's formal results framework and the various evaluative studies undertaken throughout the life of the project. The lessons extracted from the project's experience were important and relevant. However, the ICR had a few minor methodological shortcomings. The efficacy and efficiency analyses used the IE results without properly reporting whether or not the effects were found to be significant. For example, the ICR claimed that the IE attributed progress in school attendance, exclusive breastfeeding, and child labor for children aged 6-14, when in fact the IE reported that these effects were not statistically significant. The ICR (including the appendix) also reported effect sizes that were not in the IE report. Moreover, the effect on poverty was based on outdated data, and the conclusions drawn were not supported by the evidence presented. The economic analysis did not propose robustness checks or multiple scenarios using both upper-bound and lower-bound measures of efficiency. Another shortcoming stemmed from the absence of baseline information and absolute value in reporting on the results framework indicators. With neither baseline nor absolute values, valid assessment of the magnitude of progress achieved is not possible. While the baseline data was not available at the time of the PAD, it became available later during the project cycle and would have constituted useful information for the credibility of the ICR's contribution claims. The definition of each indicator, including numerator, denominator, and measurement method, was partial.

#### a. Quality of ICR Rating

Substantial