

## TC ABSTRACT

### I. Basic Project Data

▪ Country/Region:	PANAMA/CID - Isthmus & DR
▪ TC Name:	Strengthening the quality of early childhood development services in Panama
▪ TC Number:	PN-T1226
▪ Team Leader/Members:	Carolina Freire, Team Leader (SCL/SPH); Marta Rubio Alternate Team Leader (SCL/SPH); Iliá Nieto (CID/CPN); Ezequiel Cambiasso (VPC/FMP); David A. Ocho (VPC/FMP); Cristina Landazuri (LEG/SGO); Caridad Araujo (SCL/SPH); Horacio Alvarez (SCL/EDU); and Martha Guerra (SCL/SPH)
▪ Taxonomy:	Operational Support
▪ Number and name of operation supported by the TC:	Social Inclusion and Development Program-PN-L1105 - Support for the Execution
▪ Date of TC Abstract:	25 Feb 2019
▪ Beneficiary:	Republic of Panama - Ministry of Social Development
▪ Executing Agency:	Inter-American Development Bank
▪ IDB funding requested:	\$200,000.00
▪ Disbursement period:	24 months
▪ Types of consultants:	Individuals; Firms
▪ Prepared by Unit:	Social Protection & Health
▪ Unit of Disbursement Responsibility:	Country Office Panama
▪ TC included in Country Strategy (y/n):	No
▪ TC included in CPD (y/n):	No
▪ Alignment to the Update to the Institutional Strategy 2010-2020:	Social inclusion and equality

### II. Objective and Justification

- 2.1 The objective of this TC is to support the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) in improving the quality of early education and care services, by strengthening the competencies of teachers, caregivers and administrators serving in institutional and community settings, and by developing new models for expanding early education and care in rural and indigenous areas. The technical cooperation is consistent with the Bank's strategy in Panama 2015-2019 (GN-2838), by contributing to the improvement in the delivery of basic services to population living in poverty.
- 2.2 In 2009, the Government of Panama adopted an Early Childhood Development (ECD) Public Policy aimed at providing education, health, and nutrition to children under five. The Policy is especially relevant given that poverty and extreme poverty among children of this age group is 37% and 20%, respectively (MEF, 2017). Furthermore, there are gaps in the coverage and quality of critical services for early childhood. Only 2.9% of children under 3 have access to center-based education and care, and of the 104 public centers in the country, only 6% serve non-urban areas. The infrastructure, equipment and pedagogical materials of many centers is in poor condition, and educational and administrative staff have little formal training (RAIPI, 2013). At the same time, the country lacks a model for ECD services that is adapted to the context of children and families living in rural and indigenous areas, where poverty rates are above 40% and 80%, respectively, and are highly dispersed (MEF, 2017).
- 2.3 Children who grow in contexts of poverty are more vulnerable to risk factors such as malnutrition, poor health, and lack of stimulating environments, which ultimately affect their cognitive, physical and emotional development (Walker et. al, 2011).

Poor children are at a special disadvantage since they reach lower levels of cognitive development and abandon school more frequently than others (López Boo, et. al, 2016).

- 2.4 The IDB has supported MIDES' efforts towards implementation of the ECD Policy through PN-L1105 and technical cooperation's (PN-T1218, PN-T1133, PN-T1120). Financial and technical assistance has focused on increasing the coverage and quality of center-based care through the design of unified quality standards, improvements to infrastructure and basic services, staff and teacher training, and evaluation systems. The effect of these interventions on the quality of CAIPI and on child outcomes will be measured through an impact evaluation.
- 2.5 The IDB has also supported MIDES in the design of "Cuidarte", a community-based model of ECD services that was adapted from the "Reach Up and Learn" program, that helps parents improve their children's development through home visits by trained community workers. The pilot is being implemented and scale up is planned in 2019 through third-party organizations operating on a per capita basis.
- 2.6 Despite progress, the ECD Policy's implementation still lags in expanding the coverage and quality of ECD services. Evaluations related to the application of standards in CAIPI reveal significant deficiencies. Only 51% of centers planned according to the national curriculum and only 54% achieved the quality standards related to fostering significant staff-children interactions. Likewise, teachers' qualifications are variable and deficient, since only 23% of them have a degree in early education or stimulation (MIDES, 2018). Evidence suggests that among the most critical elements needed for improving quality of center-based care are the intensity and frequency of interactions among children and adults, teacher training and professional development, and systems for monitoring quality. Regarding the community-based model, MIDES lacks a system for monitoring the implementation and quality of "Cuidarte" during scale up. The institution also faces fiscal constraints that require the design of alternative models for delivering ECD services in the community through the public sector.

### III. Description of Activities and Outputs

- 3.1 In order to improve the quality of early education and care in institutional settings, specifically the centers administered by MIDES this TC will finance the following activities: (i) consulting services for the design of a certification system that combines formal education with in-service training and mentoring for teachers, assistants and administrators of the 104 CAIPI in order to increase compliance with quality standards; (ii) consulting services for the design and execution of a training program for institutional facilitators and mentors who will support the implementation and supervision of the certification system; and (iii) technical assistance in support of an ongoing impact evaluation that will evaluate the quality of ECD centers in Panama, including staff-child interaction.
- 3.2 This TC will also finance activities related to expanding coverage and ensuring quality standards in the scale up of Panama's community-based parenting program in rural and indigenous areas: (i) consulting services for the design of a monitoring and evaluation system for assessing quality of service provision during the scale up of the on-going home visiting program, and (ii) consulting services for the design of a group-based community model with related training manuals operated by the public sector.
- 3.3 **Component I: Strengthening competencies for staff of ECD centers.** This component is aimed at strengthening the competencies of teachers, caregivers and administrators who work in the early education and care centers administered by MIDES. This involves designing a certification program with the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development as well as other partners, and training a

team of facilitators and mentors who will, in turn, train and mentor 284 teachers and caregivers.

- 3.4 **Component II: Improving coverage and quality of the ECD community-based model.** The objective of this component is to improve the coverage and quality of the ECD community-based model through the design of a monitoring and evaluation system for the on-going home visiting program during scale up and the adaptation of the Reach Up and Learn model to group settings that can be operated by the public sector.

#### IV. Budget

Indicative Budget

Activity/Component	IDB/Fund Funding	Counterpart Funding	Total Funding
Strengthening competencies for staff of ECD centers	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 120,000.00
Improving coverage and quality of the ECD community-based model	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 0.00	\$ 80,000.00

#### V. Executing Agency and Execution Structure

- 5.1 The executing agency of this TC will be the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through the Division of Social Protection and Health in Panama. The IDB will coordinate the supervision of the individual consultants and firms and approve products together with the MIDES.
- 5.2 The Government of Panama, through the Ministry of Economy and Finance, has requested the Bank to be the executor of the project due to its: (i) ability of facilitate dialogue and coordination among sector line ministries involved in the delivery of early childhood services; (ii) capacity to provide technical assistance regarding the design and implementation of ECD policy and services in the region; and (iii) ability to integrate the outputs of this technical cooperation with other ongoing social protection and health initiatives.

#### VI. Project Risks and Issues

- 6.1 The main risk to TC execution is institutional capacity for coordinating, in a timely manner, the availability of the human and financial resources needed at the regional and local levels for effective implementation. There is also the risk of lack of coordination among sector line ministries involved in the design and validation of some of the TC outputs. However, these risks can be mitigated by using the National Council on Early Childhood Development coordinated by the MIDES as a coordination mechanism for implementation and supervision of the ECD Public Policy.

#### VII. Environmental and Social Classification

- 7.1 The ESG classification for this operation is "undefined".