

TC Document

I. Basic Information for TC

▪ Country/Region:	REGIONAL
▪ TC Name:	Supporting Vulnerable Students with a Distance Learning Program for Secondary Education Using Digital Platforms
▪ TC Number:	RG-T3837
▪ Team Leader/Members:	Zoido Lobaton, Pablo (SCL/EDU) Team Leader; Fernandez Coto, Raquel Auxiliadora (SCL/EDU) Alternate Team Leader; Barragan Crespo, Enrique Ignacio (LEG/SGO); Chavez Alzamora, Jose Carlos (SCL/EDU); Holguin Madrinan, Alejandra (SCL/SCL); Scannone Chavez, Rodolfo Andres (SCL/EDU)
▪ Taxonomy:	Client Support
▪ Operation Supported by the TC:	N/A
▪ Date of TC Abstract authorization:	05 Feb 2021
▪ Beneficiary:	Honduras and El Salvador
▪ Executing Agency:	Shoulder To Shoulder Inc
▪ Donors providing funding:	Japan Special Fund Poverty Reduction Program(JPO)
▪ IDB Funding Requested:	US\$600,000.00
▪ Local counterpart funding, if any:	US\$100,000.00 (In-Kind)
▪ Disbursement period (which includes Execution period):	24 months
▪ Required start date:	May 15th, 2021
▪ Types of consultants:	Individual consultants and firms
▪ Prepared by Unit:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ Unit of Disbursement Responsibility:	SCL/EDU-Education
▪ 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; Productivity and innovation

II. Objectives and Justification of the TC

- 2.1 **Objective.** The objective is to reduce learning gaps in secondary education vulnerable students (7th to 9th grade) in Honduras and El Salvador with a distance learning program using digital platforms, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program should rely on an open source and low-cost digital platform that requires minimum-to-non-internet access and provides an enriched learning environment to students based on the Honduran and El Salvadorian curriculum.
- 2.2 **Justification.** COVID-19 is the latest barrier to quality education for all of Mesoamerica's young people. Schools were closed in 9 out of 10 countries in Mesoamerica due to COVID-19 and now they are starting to reopen. It is estimated that over 23 million high school students have been affected, representing more than 95% of enrolled learners in the region. In the particular cases of Honduras and El Salvador, schools were closed on March 13th 2020, and it is only in April 2021 that the process of reopening is slowly starting amidst uncertainty.
- 2.3 In the medium term, the discontinuity of educational services will have a negative impact on dropout and student learning, particularly for those lacking economic

resources, parental support, or access to effective distance-based learning programs¹ (Cooc, McIntyre & Gomez, 2016). Based on the effects on education of previous economic crises, it is expected that close to 31,000 and 38,000 young students (10-18 years old) will not come back to school in Honduras and El Salvador, a number that represents a 6.1% and 16.8% increase in student dropout rates respectively (BID, 2020)². Preliminary analysis shows the crisis will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable: 9 out of 10 young people not coming back in Honduras and El Salvador are poor or vulnerable middle class (BID, 2020)³. Even for those who will return, preliminary estimates based on the effects of summer slowdown in the United States suggest students may lose 30% to 50% of learning in reading and mathematics compared to a typical school year (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020⁴).

- 2.4 In Honduras and El Salvador, the crisis unfolds in a particularly unfavorable context. The educational exclusion rates prior to COVID-19 are high and concentrated in the most vulnerable and lowest-income population. While the vast majority start secondary education, around half of the students do not finish (Ramirez and Viteri, 2020). Among those who complete their studies, only around 1 in 4 achieve the fundamental basic competences they need (Ramirez and Viteri 2020). This situation is even more serious for vulnerable youth, as only 1 out of 20 of the lowest income students who complete their studies achieve the fundamental basic competences they need. The COVID-19 crisis will only exacerbate the situation. In the cases of Honduras and El Salvador
- 2.5 In this context it is essential to support vulnerable students who need to catch up with their peers and reduce the impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic. Previous experience in the region shows the potential of distance learning programs that use open source and low-cost digital platforms and require minimum-to-non-internet access to successfully bridge widening learning gaps on vulnerable students⁵. None the less, considering the new challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to execute fulltime innovative distance programs since it is expected that the process of full reopening will take time and during the transition, options for distance learning will continue to be key. It is also key to build strong evidence in the region and demonstrate how best to implement, operationalize, and expand experiences under such context in the short term or as part of an innovative hybrid model once COVID-19 restrictions are fully lifted.
- 2.6 **Strategic Alignment.** This TC is aligned to the development challenge “social

¹ Only 20% of poor families in Honduras have access to internet, compared to 84% among rich families, while in El Salvador 4% of poor families have access to internet, compared to 20% among rich families (BID, 2020).

² Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (2020). Los costos educativos de la crisis sanitaria en América Latina y el Caribe. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/Los-costos-educativos-de-la-crisis-sanitaria-en-America-Latina-y-el-Caribe.pdf>

³ Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (2020). Los costos educativos de la crisis sanitaria en América Latina y el Caribe. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/Los-costos-educativos-de-la-crisis-sanitaria-en-America-Latina-y-el-Caribe.pdf>

⁴ Kuhfeld & Tarasawa (2020). The Covid-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement. https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf

⁵ Between 2015 and 2020, the NGO Shoulder to Shoulder has developed a comprehensive Education program based on an open-source digital platform that requires no access to internet called Kolibri to provide high quality digital educational content to students from all grades (K-12). In those years they have worked in over 30 schools in the rural area of Intibucá, Honduras, benefiting 4000 students and 100 teachers with promising results.

inclusion and equality” of the Second Update to IDB’s Institutional Strategy 2020-2023 (AB-3190-2) as it will contribute to increase the number of vulnerable young people who graduate high school by reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on dropout rates and student’s learning loss. Additionally, it will contribute to the development challenge productivity and innovation in the area of management tools and human capital development as higher graduation from high school will have an effect on youth capability to access the labor market. This TC is also aligned with the Country Strategies of the beneficiary countries: In El Salvador (GN-2828) with the objective of improving the quality of education; In Honduras (GN-2944) with the objective of promoting the accumulation of human capital of households in extreme poverty. Finally, it is also aligned with challenge 3 “Ensure that all students graduate from secondary school with the intermediate cognitive, technical, and socioemotional skills that allow them to keep learning throughout life, access high-quality jobs, and be good citizens” of the Skills Development Sector Framework Document (GN 3012-3). Additionally, this TC is aligned to the objectives of the “Improvement of school quality to develop capacities for the Employment: Youth Program” loan (HO-L1188), as both intend to increase access, permanence and learning outcomes for young vulnerable students in lower secondary education. Moreover, this TC also complements the efforts associated with this loan, given that the lessons to be learned from the execution and evaluation of the distance-based instruction program considered in this TC can be shared and scaled through the loan, given the current closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

III. Description of activities/components and budget

- 3.1. This TC considers three components, each of which will be implemented based on country context, needs and policy priorities:
- 3.2. **Component 1 – Distance education program delivery (US\$350,000):** This component has the objective of designing and implementing a distance education program using digital platforms to benefit 2,000 students (7th to 9th grade) in Honduras and El Salvador. This component will finance consultancy services, equipment and training as follows:
 - **School targeting and prioritization:** Consultancy service to define targeting criteria and to select final beneficiary schools in areas with vulnerable students, in close coordination with the Ministries of Education in Honduras and El Salvador. The final selection should also follow the guidelines and recommendations of the independent firm in charge of designing the impact evaluation.
 - **Content adaptation and curriculum alignment:** Consultancy service to build a distance-based learning program selecting and/or adjusting public domain and high quality field-tested digital educational resources⁶ (textbooks, class videos, interactive quizzes, exercises) for Mathematics, Communications (English, Spanish/literacy), Social Sciences and Natural Sciences to the national curriculums. Additionally, country specific content from the official government textbooks on national history or currency-based mathematics should be included as well, in coordination with the Ministries of Education. The educational resources should be available to teachers and students through an open-source digital

⁶ The educational resources should include a variety of sources such as Khan Academy, NASA, CK-12 digital libraries, among others.

learning platform that supports self-paced learning and is able to run on as many devices and operating systems as possible.

- **Equipment acquisition:**⁷ Equipment (e.g., tablets, laptops) should be provided to vulnerable students and teachers in Honduras to access the digital platform.⁸ The equipment must have been previously loaded with the digital education resources and lessons to cope with potential lack of internet connection.
- **Teacher and school staff training and support:** Training on technical aspects of the platform and pedagogy is considered a major element of the program service delivery. Training should ensure that teachers and school staff are fully capable to support students in any difficulties they face accessing the platform or following the lessons. Training sessions for all teachers and school staff participating in the program must consider the COVID-19 context and rely on training videos or online meetings as much as possible. If necessary, training activities could consider the participation of regional, departmental, and municipal staff to execute the training process.

3.3. **Component 2 – Impact evaluation (US\$220,000):** This component has the objective of conducting a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) aimed at evaluating the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of the digital platform to be implemented through this TC. This evaluation will use all gathered and available data to explore the effects of the digital platforms on the learning outcomes of young people, with a focus in young woman and indigenous population, when possible. This component will finance consultancy services to perform the following activities:

- **Design:** Design of the experimental evaluation, including the calculation of power (minimum detectable effects for the different indicators).
- **Data collection:** Quantitative data collection on two occasions to measure student learning with a standardized remote test for the baseline, and a standardized face-to-face test for the final line.
- **Data analysis:** Analysis of the data collected and elaboration of a working paper with the main results.

3.4. **Component 3 – Systematization and program transference (US\$80,000):** This component has the objective of systematizing the educational resources, training materials and operational processes developed as part of this TC as well as the most important lessons and best practices to transfer the experience to the Ministries of Education at the end of the implementation. This component will finance consultancy services to document the design and implementation processes, publish the results in a working paper and disseminate them through meetings and webinars with representatives from the Ministries of Education.

3.5. **Other Expenses – Management and audit (US\$50,000):** The objective is to oversee the execution of the program delivery and report to the IDB any deviations from original plans. Additionally, it will finance the execution of an external audit to guarantee transparency in funds execution.

⁷ The value of the equipment should not exceed 30% of the budget of the Technical Cooperation, as IADB policy guidelines require.

⁸ Students from El Salvador should access the platform through the equipment to be distributed to all public schools by the Government of El Salvador.

- 3.6. The total cost of this TC will be US\$700,000, of which US\$600,000 will be financed by the Japan Special Fund (JPO)⁹ and US\$100,000 corresponds to in-kind counterpart resources as specified in the letters of request. These in-kind contributions will cover the salaries of local experts from the Executing Agency to provide technical assistance at the national level of the participating countries. Because of the regional nature of this TC, the distribution of this in-kind contribution per country will be defined according to the specific local needs during execution, and shall be reported by the executing agency. The total execution and disbursement period will be 24 months for all activities, including six months for auditing and evaluation.

Activity/Component	IDB/JPO Fund	Counterpart Funding (in-kind)	Total Funding
Component 1: Distance education program delivery.	280,000	70,000	350,000
Component 2: Impact evaluation.	220,000	-	220,000
Component 3: Systematization and program transference.	50,000	30,000	80,000
Other expenses: Management and audit.	50,000	-	50,000
TOTAL	600,000	100,000	700,000

IV. Executing agency and execution structure

- 4.1 **Executing agency.** Shoulder to Shoulder will act as the Executing Agency for the TC. Shoulder to Shoulder is an international NGO with over 30 years of experience in Honduras providing sustainable and accessible health, nutrition, and education services. Over the past 5 years they have developed a comprehensive Education program based on an open-source digital platform to provide high quality digital educational content to students from all grades (K-12). In those years they have worked in over 30 schools in the rural area of Intibucá, Honduras, benefiting 4,000 students and 100 teachers. As part of that experience, Shoulder to Shoulder has built a model to successfully use a digital platform in areas with limited access to internet. Additionally, they have developed and/or adjusted pedagogical content (live exercises and videos sourced from Khan Academy and various other public sources), building a digital library of over 1500 English and Spanish titles. Finally, they have created materials for robust teacher training, which was complemented with a technical and pedagogical support structure for teachers.

- 4.2 **Execution Structure.** To start execution and receive agreed disbursements, Shoulder

⁹ JPO has communicated the eligibility of this project on April 4th, 2021

to Shoulder will need to comply with the General Conditions Applicable to Non-reimbursable Technical Cooperations to the IDB's satisfaction. Additionally, Shoulder to Shoulder will need to submit the following reports: i) semi-annual progress reports within thirty (30) days of the end of each calendar semester, which must include technical and financial execution; ii) a final report, within six (6) months from the date of completion of the last activity, which should include a summary of findings and conclusions; and a final report on financial execution. As the executing agency of this TC, Shoulder to Shoulder will be in charge of the purchase and distribution of equipment to beneficiaries.

- 4.3 Responsibilities for supervision and monitoring this operation will fall on SCL/EDU, including regular meetings with Shoulder to Shoulder. The designated focal point is the Sector Lead Specialist (SCL/EDU) and project team leader who will be responsible for project monitoring and supervision along with the Education Sector Specialist in Honduras. IDB Country Offices will be informed about the progress of the TC on a regular basis. It is estimated that the project will have a duration of 24 months for execution and disbursements counted from the date of approval of this TC.
- 4.4 **Procurement.** All activities to be executed under this TC have been included in the Procurement Plan (see Annex IV) and will be executed in accordance with Shoulder to Shoulder's NGO procedures, according to appendix IV of the Policies for the Procurement of Goods and Works Financed by the IDB (GN-2349-15) and appendix IV of the Policies for the Selection and Contracting of Consultants Financed by the IDB (GN-2350-9), both of May 2019.
- 4.5 As part of the conditions precedent to the first disbursement, approval of the program's operating manual that describes the procurement processes, internal control systems, fiduciary aspects, among others, will be included. The bank shall provide non-objection.
- 4.6 All knowledge products derived from this Technical Cooperation will be the Bank's intellectual property.

V. Major issues

- 5.1 Due to the higher global demand of equipment (e.g., tablets or laptops) due to COVID-19 and broken chain of production and distribution, there is a risk of important delays in availability; consequently, delaying the TC implementation. Mitigation actions include permanent monitoring of suppliers and their stocks as well as close coordination with other procurement entities.
- 5.2 Other risks considered for this TC are those related to the distribution of equipment to students in the current context. Mitigation actions include a close coordination and early involvement between Shoulder to Shoulder and the Ministries of Education to ensure the appropriate measures for the timely delivery.

VI. Exceptions to Bank policy

- 6.1 There are no exceptions to Bank Policies.

VII. Environmental and Social Strategy

- 7.1 According to the Environmental and Safeguards Compliance Policy (OP-703), Indigenous Peoples (OP-765), and Gender Equality (OP-270), this TC is classified as category “C”. The TC will not finance infrastructure or civil works. The proposed interventions are expected to cause minimal to no negative impacts. See filters [SPF](#) and [SSF](#).

Required Annexes:

[Request from the Client - RG-T3837](#)

[Results Matrix - RG-T3837](#)

[Terms of Reference - RG-T3837](#)

[Procurement Plan - RG-T3837](#)