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Case Study: Gender Integration into Education Programming in Honduras

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I. Introduction

Poverty and insecurity are the most critical barriers to Honduras' development trajectory. Transnational gangs and narcotics trafficking, crime and violence committed by gangs and drug traffickers, combined with a culture of impunity, have escalated to critical levels. In addition, Honduras has a high prevalence of domestic violence, extortion, and trafficking in persons that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. While male homicides constitute 90 percent of all murders, the percentage of femicides has been rising. Between 2005 and 2014, the percentage of femicides for girls ages 15 to 19 has increased by 487,5 percent compared to 1.61 percent for boys¹. On average, 51 women are killed in Honduras each month, and 97 percent of these cases remain unsolved². The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, And Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community faces its own set of violence issues in Honduras. Protests by LGBT activists focus on the fact that 186 homosexuals were murdered between 2009 and 2012, and the majority of the cases remain unsolved. An estimated 90 percent of children with disabilities are out of school; they are less likely to enroll and complete a full cycle of basic education. Persons with disabilities, including children and youth, are at a disproportionate risk for violence, including gender-based violence, and are over-represented among the poorest of the poor.

Gangs are using schools as recruitment centers, forcing children to sell drugs, extort money, and perform unwanted sexual acts, while threatening boys and girls with penalty of death in extreme cases³. *The presence of organized crime in schools directly affects access to, retention, and completion of school. In fact, homicide rates correlate with migration and school enrollment⁴. Exposure to violence and trauma correlates with low learning outcomes and deficits in cognitive function. Sexual violence and gender-based violence (GBV) act both as consequences and drivers of violence in schools, households, and communities.*

GBV is largely normalized and disregarded in Honduras. Power relationships are unequal, and the roles and status of women, men and populations of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are subject to oppression, marginalization, and disempowerment. Educators tend to consider GBV as part of what you learn in the family, from parents, from a patriarchal and *machista* society, especially in households that have been separated by migration. Those children and adolescents who suffer from

KEY COUNTRY STATS

- In 2014, Honduras had the highest murder rate in the world, at 79 killings per 100,000 inhabitants - an average of 18 murders a day.
- Violence costs the country 9.6 percent of its gross domestic product.
- Honduran youth between the ages of 13-17 are the most targeted age group by criminal organizations.
- Seventy-four percent of victims of sexual violence are between the ages of 10 and 19.
- Unemployment and underemployment is two-thirds higher for women than for men.

¹ Encompass GA 2015, p.8

² Honduras National Autonomous University's Violence Observatory

³ USAID, 2015b; Casa Alianza, 2016

⁴ Orozco and Valdivia, 2017; Inter-American Dialogue Database on Violence, Education and Migration (2016)

exposure to GBV in their households, or are victims themselves, replicate the vicious cycles of perpetration and victimization. Teachers are also victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. Insecurity fuels and is fueled by the overwhelmingly masculine gang culture, where conforming to dominant norms of masculinity, including violence and rape against women and girls, is critical to being accepted in a gang. Young women and girls are being sexually assaulted by gang members to pressure them into drug trafficking and extortion⁵, resulting in unwanted pregnancy. There is ample evidence that teen pregnancy, a major determinant of school dropout and unemployment in Honduras, is linked to sexual abuse and incest in homes and in the community. While policies and laws are in place to protect children, the patterns of weak implementation and poor institutional response, combined with victims' rampant fear of reprisal by gangs or police, are powerful deterrents to reporting and therefore preventing further acts of violence.

Education institutions in Honduras play a dual role of being victims and targets of violence and contributing to the problem by replicating societal patterns within their walls. Gender inequalities take many forms, but GBV is the most pervasive and harmful practice in Honduras. While education cannot address all the drivers of inequalities and violence, it can help reverse its role by promoting equity, safety, and positive social and gender norms, while empowering youth to take control of their own futures and live in a more peaceful environment.

Structure

This analysis uses the USAID Gender Integration in Education Framework to frame the description of USAID-funded education programs in Honduras. It revolves around the integration of Equity, Safety and Empowerment Guiding Principles to ensure evidence-based educational outcomes. The first section provides background on gender issues in Honduras. The next section describes USAID/Honduras' approach and breaks down the elements of its education programs that fit within components of the Gender Framework. The last section includes a short list of lessons learned, which can hopefully be applied to education programs in other global contexts.

Methodology

Findings in this brief were based on a series of interviews conducted by USAID's senior gender specialist in education in country. The programs reviewed include: *Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras (MIDEH)*, Teacher Citizen Participation Project (also known as *EducAcción*; *Empleando Todos*; *Asegurando la Educación*), and the Honduras Reading Activity. More about these projects can be found in Annex A. The final brief was developed in consultation with mission staff and regional education experts in Washington, DC.

⁵ Encompass GA, 2015,p.8

2. Background

Gender Inequality, Gender-Based Violence, and Education

KEY GENDER STATS

- The 2017 gender parity index (GPI) in primary education is 1.02, which indicates that more females attend primary school than males.
- In 2017, at the secondary level, the gap in favor of girls increased to 1.17; only 45.5 percent of male students attended school compared to 53.5 percent of female students.
- To date, 65 percent of schools have written policies for the prevention of acts of violence.
- The Ministry of Education has identified the need to promote gender equity in the system, including a safe school environment and elimination of discriminatory teaching and learning materials.
- A third of schoolgirls say that school is not safe.
- Fifty eight percent of the secondary school age population is out of school. One out of three adolescent is in school.
- Female drop-out rates are mostly due to pregnancy, which is frequently caused by rape or incestual abuse.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND GBV NEGATIVELY IMPACT ACCESS TO, RETENTION AND COMPLETION OF EDUCATION IN HONDURAS.

While poverty is cited as the primary factor of school drop-out, violence against children and youth is cited as the second most important factor. Schools are *semilleros*, or incubators for recruitment into gangs. Boys drop out of school to either work or join gangs, while girls drop out because of early unions and teen pregnancy, forcing them to remain in a domestic role. Gang threats and control of public spaces, violence by males against males, the lack of physical and psychological safety in school and on the way to school, and distance to secondary schools are all insurmountable barriers for both boys and girls, students with disabilities, or in the LGBTI community. Youth ages 15 to 18 particularly struggle to find and maintain employment.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND GBV NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING.

Curriculum, teaching and learning materials, and pedagogical practices do not address inequalities and negatively reinforce social and gender norms that drive the occurrence of GBV. *Educación* reports that there is little awareness of such issues in the education community, and education staff members do not know how to address them nor how to implement gender responsive strategies⁶. As a result, gender discrimination and gendered differential treatments are common in assessments of school work and in allocation of spaces to girls and boys.⁷ Teachers tend to discipline boys and girls differently.

⁶ Informe Técnica 3, Equidad De Género En Educación, Informe Ejecutivo,

⁷ Proceso De Sistematización Del Modelo De Escuelas, EduAccion, USAID , Julio 2016

GENDER INEQUALITY AND GBV NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE SAFETY OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.

Schools reflect the societal practices and norms of the communities they serve and therefore reproduce the inequalities of the social and cultural environment. Boys and girls are victims and perpetrators of three main forms of violence: physical, especially between boys; sexual, especially against girls; and psychological, such as bullying and insulting. On the one hand, teachers and administrators reproduce patterns of gender-based sexual harassment as well as corporal punishment; but at the same time, they also suffer from violence themselves. They simultaneously have to cope with physical and psychological threats from gangs and pressure from parents not to intervene when their children are showing signs of problems. Domestic violence, particularly in households fragmented by migration, perpetuates gang membership and sex slavery, peer-to-peer violence, and teen pregnancy. Students with disabilities and those from marginalized and poor communities, especially the LGBTI community, are particularly targeted by peers and teachers. Increasingly, information and communications technology (ICT) is used for cyberbullying, sexting, and death threats to teachers. Digital devices are also used to recruit boys into gang membership, pressure them into extortion and drug dealing, and lure school girls into prostitution and sex slavery. The role of government institutions is ambiguous. There is a strong regulatory and legal framework to prevent, punish, and eradicate violence against boys and girls, and protocols are to be applied in schools. In reality, the lack of enforcement and institutional response further increases the degree of impunity for perpetrators.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND GBV NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE ACQUISITION OF EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The lack of control that youth feel over their lives and their future stems from social, cultural, and economic pressures. Honduras is firmly anchored in a culture of *machismo* brought about by a patriarchal society. Decision-making patterns are heavily based on masculine leadership to the detriment of women and girls. Such inequalities are exacerbated by pervasive domestic and gang-related violence. In this context, women minimize GBV; men and women are stigmatized or punished when reporting or complaining about abuse; and the LGBTI community and students with disabilities feel defenseless when faced with such obstacles. Suicide among adolescents is frequently cited as a consequence of powerlessness. Conversely, information about legal rights provides youth with a platform for regaining a sense of leadership and ability to respond. Youth aspire to gain employment and respect and to live healthy and productive lives. Youth who live in the most violent part of the country are deprived of such hope and see migration as their only path out of a desperate environment.

3. Good Practice

Gender-Responsive Education Programming: USAID/Honduras Approach

USAID recognizes the tight linkages between violence, poverty, and gender, and their negative impact on investments, including education. Across all the stages of the Program Cycle, USAID/Honduras presents an exceptional model of gender integration, as described in The Business of Integration Brief. The approach is robustly grounded in operating principles that aim to connect goals, programs, and partners with each other. As a result, security, gender, and social inclusion goals are tightly woven into education objectives and program design and implementation.

The current USAID-funded education programs in Honduras demonstrate good practices in integrating gender and social inclusion. The programs reviewed include: Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil de Honduras (MIDEH), Teacher Citizen Participation Project (also known as *EducAcción*; *Empleando Todos*; *Asegurando la Educación*), and the Honduras Reading Activity.

The goal of the USAID/Honduras Country Development Cooperation Strategy is a more prosperous and safer Honduras that advances inclusive social and economic development among vulnerable populations. USAID works towards two Development Objectives:

- 1) Citizen Security Increased For Vulnerable Populations In Urban, High-Crime Areas, and
- 2) Extreme Poverty Sustainably Reduced For Vulnerable Populations In Western Honduras

Ensuring Equity in Education

GOOD PRACTICE 1: EQUITY AND INCLUSION

All USAID-funded education programs in Honduras focus on providing equitable access to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, and intentionally focus on gender and ethnic intersectionalities. They are located in the high crime areas around urban centers and in communities in western Honduras, specifically in the violent neighborhoods of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro de Sula, Choloma, Tela, and La Ceiba. The primary beneficiaries are boys and girls, youth, LGBTI communities, and youth with disabilities. *Empleando Futuros* ensures that the LGBTI community is given equal opportunity for training and employment. For instance, *Empleando Futuros* works with Somos CDC, an LGBTI support organization that works with diverse indigenous and ethnic groups and gender identities. *Empleando Futuros* also developed labor market assessments that included surveys on attitudes regarding hiring members of the LGBTI community.

GOOD PRACTICE 2: EQUITY IN EDUCATION POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

The Teacher Development Program, supported by USAID as a G2G agreement, introduced diversity as a criterion for teachers' recruitment. The new recruitment regulations stipulate that Honduran teachers will be recruited regardless of gender and other discriminatory criteria.

GOOD PRACTICE 3: EQUITY OF ACCESS TO ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Several education programs provide access to complementary education services for children and youth to ensure that the most vulnerable have equitable opportunities to succeed. *Educación* supports after-school activities where mentors can meet with youth and girls can safely talk. ForPaz helped create five youth centers in which a culture of peace and conflict resolution is deeply embedded in the community. The centers offer vocational training based on a local labor market analysis. They are now fully sustainable and have brought community members together while securing safety in the streets.

GOOD PRACTICE 4: GENDER-RESPONSIVE LEARNING MATERIALS

Empleando Futuros, *Asegurando la Educación*, and ForPaz systematically review teaching and learning materials to reverse gender stereotypes in texts and illustrations. For instance, the picture of a father reading to his children in the *Educación* -funded readers is a powerful way to address gender norms in materials. *Empleando Futuros* reviewed all manuals and guides on life skills, basic labor competencies manuals, membership guides, and Capstone materials for gender sensitivity. MIDEH has incorporated statistical filtering of gender and social inclusion- bias test items in their item bank. In addition, Honduran students authored and illustrated 42 anthologies written in Spanish as well as indigenous languages, such as Garifuna, Miskito, Tol, and Pesh. *Educación* provided the story books to libraries where children find peace and relief from the violent environments they live in.

GOOD PRACTICE 5: TEACHING PRACTICES

Schools under *Educación* have implemented *Escuelas de la Equidad*, a model for inclusion and gender equity that promotes behavior change around gender perceptions in teaching and learning. The model recognized that gender equity issues needed to be addressed to achieve education outcomes. The project developed guides on Positive Actions related to gender and equity while focusing on learning outcomes. The term "equity" was interpreted by stakeholders and beneficiaries so that they could adopt and internalize the very concept they meant to implement in school.

Ensuring Safety in Education

Prevention of School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)

GOOD PRACTICE 1: ASSESSMENTS

All programs assessments included collecting qualitative and quantitative data on violence in each partner school, such as the number of violence-related behaviors, injuries, and deaths; the frequency, location, and victimology of violence; and details on the common types of perpetrators. They also

reviewed key risk and protective factors for violence; school culture and SBV prevention protocols, such as existing curricular and extracurricular activities addressing SBV and SRGBV prevention.

GOOD PRACTICE 2: TRAINING

Teachers, facilitators, and coaches from all education programs have received or will engage in training to recognize violence and identify ways to prevent it. There is a wide range of strategies that include reducing corporal punishment and suspension of students, training in masculinity so that boys can play and study with girls, and implementing positive discipline. Training sessions are carefully designed to address the role of teachers, both as victims and perpetrators of violence.

Community Engagement

GOOD PRACTICE 3: SAFETY MEASURES WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

Schools are a means to promote social cohesion and community engagement in addressing crime. In collaboration with community leaders, ForPaz and *Educación* developed and expanded local strategies to prevent, mitigate, or respond to threats that include gang violence and recruitment, trafficking, and kidnappings. For instance, tutors worked with community leaders and school staff to develop safety routes for students so that they do not get caught on rival gang's territories. In other instances, communities and schools communicated with their networks, which included engaging with gangs to make sure that locations were safe before conducting education activities. Mothers were more likely to let their daughters attend events when there was local collective accountability for safety measures.

GOOD PRACTICE 4: COORDINATION WITH OTHER SECTORS

Honduran Social Investment Fund resources were used to consult women and girls and men and boys to inform the planning and design of gender-responsive infrastructure improvement programs. As a result, important elements such as lights, latrines, water, boundary walls, and other features were included to ensure safety.

Transforming Gender and Social Norms

GOOD PRACTICE 5: RIGHTS OF THE MARGINALIZED

Empleando Futuros and SOMOS CDC sensitize youth and educators on the rights of LGBTI and ethnic and indigenous communities to enroll in formal and non-formal education services and employment.

GOOD PRACTICE 6: SURVEYING ATTITUDES

The *Empleando Futuros* Labor Market Assessment included a survey of attitudes towards hiring young women and members of the LGBTI community. Collection also included information on the reasons for hiring or firing a man or a woman; the criteria for hiring women, people with disabilities or from ethnic groups; and how sexual harassment is handled.

GOOD PRACTICE 7: MASCULINITIES

ForPaz, *Empleando Futuros*, and *Asegurando la Educación* teach about masculinities and work with male champions to speak out against violence. For instance, the following question on norms is used to monitor changes in perceptions: Do you believe that men can prevent physical and sexual violence against women and girls?

GOOD PRACTICE 8: NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

Educación and *Asegurando la Educación* address prejudice that normalize violence, especially against girls and women. For instance, *Asegurando la Educación*'s gender assessment revealed that 42 percent of students agree that “when a girl is assaulted, she is the one who looked for it.” The programs systematically challenge the acceptance of violence as a norm in life, in school, and in the workplace.

Ensuring Empowerment and Leadership

Gender-Transformative Technical, Academic and Life Skills

GOOD PRACTICE 1: CRITICAL SKILLS

Empleando Futuros uses an array of training and coaching strategies to impart critical skills linked to youth employment and agency. The Life Skills programs include: Personal Development, Communication, Work Habits, Leadership, the Labor Market, and Entrepreneurship. The Basic Labor Competencies Manual focuses on reading comprehension, applied math, and analytical abilities. The gender analysis revealed the type of skills and assets boys and girls need, resulting in more gender-responsive materials.

GOOD PRACTICE 2: LIFE SKILLS

The way to empowerment for some LGBTI youth is to sustain their self-esteem and a degree of confidence in who they are. *Empleando Futuros* engages with SOMOS CD to help identify youth whose gender identity does not match their ID card and also conducts self-esteem workshops.

GOOD PRACTICE 3: SKILLS FOR TEACHERS AND TRAINERS

Education staff also receives training on soft skills and behaviors, such as empathy, self-esteem, and self-control to empower them as educators and individuals. For instance, *Asegurando la Educación* and *Empleando Futuros* empower teachers to inculcate the attitude of *convivencia*, which conveys peaceful coexistence, equity, and democratic values.

Mentoring and Coaching for Leadership

GOOD PRACTICE 4: PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

The USAID/Honduras education programs all recognize that they need to increase citizen participation, especially among women, to influence decision-making processes for service delivery. Women are encouraged to become members of committees and to provide oversight, such as monitoring school attendance and inclusivity.

GOOD PRACTICE 5: MENTORING

This approach is used to foster positive self-esteem and completion of education programs, thereby making employers more likely to hire youth from gang-controlled areas and girls or youth with disabilities. *Asigurando* creates partnerships, such as helping university students become mentors and role models for at-risk youth, especially those in families without fathers or other elders who can provide examples of appropriate behavior. Similarly, ForPaz engaged local youth to become tutors who help children to do homework in safe places. ForPaz adopted the approach of positive discipline to be used by parents and facilitators based on the recognition that prevention of violence has to start with the family.

GOOD PRACTICE 6: YOUTH CENTERS

Violence was reduced when youth centers became functional, safe, and heavily attended by locals. The road to empowerment, especially for women, included tutoring after school in drama, English, computer, dance, sports, and micro enterprise. When girls and women attended vocational courses, and even Zumba classes, they started taking control of their lives and their personal safety.

Gender Mainstreaming

GOOD PRACTICE 7: STAFF TRAINING

Empleando Futuros provides staff training on gender, masculinities, and inclusion every other month. The program also reached out to civil society organizations, community-based organizations, and partners to ensure that they understand and internalized gender issues in their own lives and in project operations.

GOOD PRACTICE 8: MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The project developed a guide on how to use a gender lens when recruiting staff and monitoring its use. For instance, the *Empleando Futuros* Gender and Social Inclusion Specialist makes visits to each implementing partner to assess their performance relative to the gender domains and their impact on trained youth. Clauses on non-discrimination in hiring processes and prevention of sexual harassment and GBV must be added in sub-contracts.

GOOD PRACTICE 9: PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

Empleando Futuros integrates gender issues in all trainings including the rights and responsibilities of employers and beneficiaries in the workplace, as well as in professional development activities. This includes addressing issues of sexual harassment, verbal and physical abuse in training spaces, in projects, and in the workplace.

4. Lessons Learned

This review revealed a number of strong recommendations and lessons learned:

LESSON LEARNED 1: CONDUCT A GENDER ANALYSIS

In several cases, the gender analysis revealed such powerful findings that the project had to redirect its programmatic focus to address inequalities and GBV and hired a full-time gender and social inclusion specialist.

LESSON LEARNED 2: ONE-DAY TRAININGS ON GENDER ISSUES ARE NOT EFFECTIVE

They do not lead to buy-in from staff. Instead, it is recommended that mini sessions be held with staff over the life of the project. Session topics include: masculinities and working with men, gender-responsive theories of change, promotion of women leaders in the workplace, intersectionality, and social inclusion. Trainings of staff on gender responsiveness must include strategies that are inspiring, reflective, and collaborative.

LESSON LEARNED 3: INVEST IN COMMUNITY AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Programs that are now sustainable, such as ForPaz, spent most of the first year working with community leaders to establish trust and some degree of security before launching the project. This phase was used to map gang activity. The purpose was to find out who were the real leaders, the risks and potential enemies, a clearer picture of power roles and allocation, and safety routes.

LESSON LEARNED 4: LEAD WITH COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Neighborhood-based organizations and other NGOs tend to be the first actors to establish a presence in the gang-controlled areas, before the government can come in and provide services. While government representatives are not welcomed into violent neighborhoods, ProPaz involved the Ministry of Culture to organize cultural events which would resonate with the community. These efforts allowed communities and the government to develop the beginning of trusting relationships.

LESSON LEARNED 5: SCHOOL TUTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

School tutors are the most powerful and effective link between youth and the school.

LESSON LEARNED 6: CONNECT WITH OTHER SECTORS AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

The connections between various projects are the basis for complementary and holistic integration of gender issues in all interventions.

Annex A: Projects Reviewed

Asegurando la Educación

Based on USAID's Education Strategy and as part of the Mission's primary violence-prevention efforts, *Asegurando la Educación* identifies schools located in high-crime, urban areas where children and youth have limited access to education services and are most vulnerable to becoming perpetrators or victims of violence. The project's main goal is to address school-based violence (SBV) that impedes the delivery of education and its goals of access, retention, and learning; and to use education and school processes to contribute to violence prevention in target communities. This US\$20-million initiative, with a 5-year period performance, is currently implementing activities in 14 schools located in the municipalities of the Central District, San Pedro Sula, Choloma, Tela, and La Ceiba. Throughout the life of the project, *Asegurando la Educación* is expecting to reach children, youth, and teachers in 70 schools in target municipalities.

Teacher Professional Development Agreement, a G2G initiative

The Ministry of Education (MOE) through the General Direction of Professional Development (DGDP) is responsible for the permanent professional development for in-service teachers from different levels (kindergarten, elementary, and high school). Based on the agreement on the transformation of Normal Schools that were initially responsible for the education of pre-service teachers, the MOE transformed these institutions into centers for professional development under the Sistema Nacional de Formación Docente (SINAFOD).

Empleando Futuros

The USAID-funded Workforce Development (WFD) activity, *Empleando Futuros*, is a 5-year project targeting high-crime areas within the USAID/Honduras Development Objective (DO) 1 municipalities that will increase employment and income-generating opportunities for youth who are the most at-risk of being perpetrators of violence. This activity strengthens comprehensive workforce readiness services, including job linkage and self-employment, to benefit male and female at-risk youth, including those who qualify for secondary and tertiary violence-prevention services. The activity expands current opportunities for youth and strengthens local WFD and youth-oriented programs and inputs through a series of integrated WFD best-practice support and interventions.

EducAcción

Proyecto EducAcción (Teacher Citizen Participation Project) was implemented from 2011 to 2017, and collaborated with the Government of Honduras to strengthen education through the achievement of *Metas Empleando Futuros* and community participation among 180 schools in the country. *EducAcción* works directly for the development of education management competencies, based on results of standardized, end-of-grade tests and monthly formative assessment. These results are used to make

administrative and pedagogical decisions. *EducAcción* staff also provides technical support to schools in cross-cutting areas, such as gender-sensitive approaches in the classroom and school, intercultural bilingual education, and fostering a culture of peace in schools.

MIDEH (Mejorando el Impacto al Desempeño Estudiantil en Honduras)

This project has collaborated with the Government of Honduras since 2000, with the implementation of the DCNB in the classroom, including application of evaluation tests (diagnostic, monthly formative and end-of-grade), and the effective use of the results to improve classroom teaching. Additionally, it has promoted the use of the evaluation results through the design and implementation of Improvement Plans of Academic Achievement in Spanish and Mathematics at the different levels of the education system.