

Report – November 5th 2023

Financial summary:

Project agreed: December 13th, 2022: Grant of US\$ 16,300 from the Fondation Eagle to the Condor Trust for Education for the continuation of eye tests/glasses in and around Quito, Ecuador

Amount spent on new campaigns in period from January 2023 to end of October 2023: US\$15,104.22

Amount remaining: US\$1,203.78 (end October 2023, including \$8 carried forward from 2022)

Background to the Project

The Condor Trust provides funding for secondary and further education for young people from low-income families in Ecuador. Several years ago, we became aware that many children are not making the most of their education because of sight problems. Encouraged by the Fondation Eagle, we looked into how we could help improve this situation, and linked up with a local Ecuadorian charity, Vista para Todos (Sight for All), which provides eye-tests and glasses.

Since mid-2012 the Eagle Foundation has been supporting this project. We have now received ten rounds of funding, and up to the end of October 2023 in total we have:

- Performed 7,619 eye tests;
- Provided 3,263 pairs of glasses.

The Current Project

Between January and the end of October 2023, we organised eight campaigns, as well as helping several Condor Trust students and their families. A total of 532 eye tests were conducted. In 298 cases glasses were found necessary. These were manufactured and then delivered by Vista para Todos. A further small campaign is being planned for November 2023, which will use up the total funds we received for 2023.

Choice of Organisations: The eight campaigns have taken place mainly in Trusts (*Fundaciones*) in and around Quito. Although in the first years of the project, we worked in selected state schools in poor areas of the city, several years ago the government contacted Vista para Todos and forbade us to work in state schools as, they claimed, the government itself was doing this work. Although this was not the case, we complied with the ruling, and began to work with non-state schools and organisations. There are many schools in this category, usually run by charities. All of the young people in these schools come from families existing on very low incomes.

For several years, we contacted schools in this category, asking if they needed help with glasses for their students. More recently, we (Condor and Vista para Todos) have begun to be contacted by Trusts of this sort and other similar organisations, as Vista para Todos's work has become better known. Typically, an organisation calls Vista para Todos and speaks with the Director. He asks about the organisation if he does not know it and assesses the needs of the students. If the organisation seems to fit with our aims, he requests a formal application from the organisation, which outlines their activities and needs. He then discusses with the Condor Trust's administrator to check she is happy that the campaign fits our criteria and should go ahead.

Project Ref: FF 0656 Eye Tests & Glasses – Condor Trust, Ecuador

All the organisations where we have carried out campaigns are exclusively or mainly focused on children and young people. In some cases, however, older people have come along, sometimes accompanying their children for example, and when requested Vista para Todos has included the adults if the staff considered they were low-income adults and in need. This was particularly the case in the campaigns in the special schools run by Quito Municipality, which teaches older students with mental or physical disabilities as well as younger students, and in the Fundación Nuestros Jovenes, which works with immigrant families.

Expenditure Details and Notes

Summary of Expenditure by Campaign, February to November 4th, 2023

Name of School/Organisation	Date of campaign	No. of Eye Tests	Cost of Eye Tests (\$)	No. of Glasses	Cost of Glasses (\$)	Total Costs (\$)
San Juan Bosco foundation, Simiatug, Guaranda	February 8 th	70	175.00	22	1,256.00	1,431.00
Municipio de Quito, special education school	March 26 th	70	175.00	47	2,180.00	2,355.00
Fundación Nuestros Jovenes	April 13 th	42	105.00	41	1,799.00	1,904.00
Fundación Mandaluz	June 3 rd	51	127.50	30	1,304.00	1,431.50
ASOTRAB	July 27 th	60	150.00	34	1,673.00	1,823.00
Santa Maria del Toachi parish	August 22/23 rd	108	270.00	36	1,100.00	1,370.00
Fundación Mi Caleta	September 27 th	52	130.00	19	665.00	795.00
Condor students & families	April-October	20	50.00	20	1,574.72	1,624.72
Fundación Letra para Todos	October *	59	147.50	49	2,222.50	2,370.00
TOTAL		532	1,330.00	298	13,774.22	15,104.22

* Full campaign details not yet available.

Differences between Proposal and Work Carried Out

Fewer eye tests were conducted than in the proposal, and fewer glasses have also been provided. It is always difficult to estimate exact numbers, as there are a number of variables:

- some organisations do an initial filter themselves, so that not all young people are tested. In these cases, the proportion needing glasses is higher than average;
- in some cases, the proportion of young people needing stronger (and more expensive) glasses is higher than in others. This in turn can be for a variety of reasons, including previous care (if any), amount of screen use, general health and extent of poverty etc.
- the cost of eye tests has remained the same as last year (\$2.50), but the average cost of lenses has risen.

	Estimate in proposal	Actual carried out	Difference
Number of eye tests	800	532	- 268
Number of glasses	450	298	- 152

Note: Figures cover the period up to early November 2023. Actual tests/glasses numbers will be higher by the end of December 2023, when the unspent funds have been used up.

Project Ref: FF 0656 Eye Tests & Glasses – Condor Trust, Ecuador

Area of operation: Nearly all the campaigns have taken place in and around Quito. The two exceptions are the San Juan Bosco foundation, which is in Bolivar province, south of Quito, and Santa Maria del Toachi parish, which is in Santo Domingo province, west of Quito. In both these cases, we received particularly strong requests for help for young people. Both are areas of above average poverty.

Further Comments

- Since the start of the project in 2012, Vista para Todos has provided eye tests at reduced rates. Vista para Todos also provide all the glasses frames free of charge.
- The cost of a pair of lenses varies between \$20 and over \$150 in rare and complex cases. Around two-thirds of glasses in 2023 cost between \$20 and \$37 a pair and the majority of the remainder between \$55 and \$65. Around 8% of glasses cost over \$70. One Condor student, Luis, not only needed glasses but also a small operation on his left eye, which in total cost \$228.
- During and after each campaign, the team from Vista para Todos makes a number of recommendations, directly to the young people and their parents/carers and also, in person and in writing, to the school or organisation attended by the young people. Typically, these recommendations include:
 - Parents and carers should ensure that young people do not exceed the recommended daily time limits for looking at screens (laptops, telephones, tablets etc);
 - Parents and carers should encourage the young people to wear their glasses when studying, and should stress the importance of doing this, not only in order to prevent eye-sight deterioration but also to promote better health and, in many cases, better results at school;
 - Parents and carers should ensure that the young people take care of their glasses when they are not in use (regular cleaning, storing in the glasses cases provided etc.);
 - Young people should have a visual check-up every year.

Campaign 1: Comunidad San Juan Bosco

Organisation visited: Comunidad San Juan Bosco, Simiatug, Bolívar province.

This community is part of the Salesians of Don Bosco Catholic foundation, founded in 1869 to help poor young people. The organisation has 28 establishments in Ecuador, including this one in Simiatug, located in a rural area of the Andes, near the town of Guaranda, around 230km south of Quito. In Simiatug, their activities include a Centro de Promoción y Capacitación de la Mujer (Centre for Women's Training), which unemployed local women attend, taking their children with them on Wednesdays.



In January 2023, one of the nuns working in the community contacted Vista para Todos and asked if they could provide eye tests and glasses for these children, all of whom come from low-income families.

Eye tests were conducted on February 8th, and the glasses handed over two weeks later on February 22nd.

Most of the people in this part of the country are indigenous, a section of the population which has a high rate of poverty. Bolívar is also one of the poorest provinces in Ecuador. In a survey conducted in July 2023, for example, it was found to be the province with the second highest rate of chronic infant malnutrition (30.3% of children under the age of two, compared with the national average of 20.1%).



Sources: More on Don Bosco in Ecuador: <https://www.salesianasecuador.org/quienes-somos/nuestra-presencia>
More on infant malnutrition in Ecuador: <https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/primera-encuesta-especializada-revela-que-el-20-1-de-los-ninos-en-ecuador-padecen-de-desnutricion-cronica-infantil/>

Campaign 2: Municipio de Quito

Organisation visited: Municipio de Quito, Unidad de Educación Extraordinaria, presencial y semipresencial (Quito Municipality, Special Education Unit, in person and in person/online)

The municipality of Quito runs a network of 14 special education establishments in different parts of the city for young people over the age of 15 and adults who are assessed as vulnerable and in need of special educational support to help them overcome academic and emotional problems. While doing this work, the municipality became aware that many of their students seemed to have visual problems, which were affecting their academic progress. The programme coordinator approached Vista para Todos in March 2023 and asked whether they could help by providing free eye tests.

At the end of March 2023, Vista para Todos visited several of the institutions within the municipal programme, while students from smaller institutions were asked to visit one of the Vista para Todos offices in central Quito. In this way, all the students who had been identified by the coordinator as having problems were able to have eye tests.

Most of the students were aged 15 to 18, but some were older. Among the older students, some were disabled or suffering more serious mental problems. All were assessed by the municipality as low-income. Those who needed glasses received them ten days later on April 5th.



Campaign 3: Fundación Nuestros Jovenes

Organisation visited: Fundación Nuestros Jovenes (Our Youth Foundation)

The Fundación Nuestros Jovenes (FNJ) is based in the San Antonio de Pichincha parish. This is just to the north of Quito and more or less on the equator. The foundation is a charity, which was registered in Ecuador in August 1982. It works mainly with children and young people who are in need of protection, care or support, and aims to improve their situation by focusing on human rights, ethnic and generational issues and mobility. This also involves the provision of physical and mental health care. The charity also works with women, and increasingly with immigrants who have arrived in the Quito area.

The number of immigrants in Ecuador has increased greatly in recent years, mainly as a result of Venezuelans leaving their country in search of work. In 2020, for example, around 785,000 migrants arrived in the country (49% more than in 2015). Although the number has subsequently fallen, the flow of new migrants has not stopped, and many migrants who stayed in Ecuador, rather than travelling on further to Peru or Chile for example, are struggling to survive.

On February 14th 2023, the President of FNJ approached Vista para Todos with a request for eye tests and glasses for the migrants they are helping in San Antonio. Once the visit was agreed, FNJ offered the opportunity to attend to all the Venezuelans and other immigrants it is supporting. Because of the nature of the work of FNJ, the people who needed help were a mixture of young people, mainly teenagers, but also some older people up to the age of 60. Tests were conducted on April 13th and the glasses delivered on April 21st.

Nearly all those who attended needed glasses (98%). This particularly high proportion has because most had had no access to visual care during the time they were travelling to Ecuador or after their arrival.



Sources: More on Fundación Nuestros Jovenes: <https://www.fnj.org.ec/about.html>

More on migration: <http://www.derechosmovilidadhumana.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Estudio-percepcion-sobre-ejercicio-derechos-acceso-a-servicios-convivencia-movilidad-humana.pdf>

Campaign 4: Fundación Mandaluz

Organisation visited: Fundación Mandaluz - Manos que dan Luz (Mandaluz Trust – Hands which give Light)

The Fundación Mandaluz (FM) is a charity registered in Ecuador (MIES 0020-2017) which works in Quito with children, young people and people with a disability, who are in poverty and vulnerable. It concentrates on two projects: the eradication of child poverty and the eradication of begging. At present, it is working with about 400 people and their families. Activities of the Trust include workshops and lectures on topics such as mental and physical health, violence within the family, educational trips to museums for young people, work with other organisations to try and reduce begging etc.

Child poverty in Ecuador is high. According to UNICEF, in December 2021, 32.9% of people living in households with children or adolescents were in a situation of income poverty, compared with 9.7% of people in households without children and adolescents. These figures relate to the pandemic period and are likely to be 4-5% lower in summer 2023, but they remain high.

In May 2023, the FM contacted Vista para Todos asking for help in improving the visual health of around 100 of the people it supports. Eye tests were conducted on June 3rd and glasses given to those needing them on June 10th. The tests were conducted in a community hall at the Mercado Kennedy (Kennedy Market) in northern Quito. A total of 84 children and young people were invited for the eye tests, of whom 51 arrived on the day. Thirty of these were found to need glasses and three (a relatively high number) had to be referred to an ophthalmologist for further tests and possible treatment.



Arriving at the campaign site in the Mercado Kennedy



Sources: More on Fundación Mandaluz: <https://www.fundacionmandaluz.org>
More on child poverty in Ecuador: <https://www.unicef.org/media/135881/file/Ecuador-2022-COAR.pdf>,
<https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/pobreza-por-ingresos/>

Campaign 5: ASOTRAB

Organisation visited: Asociación de Trabajadores Autónomos Organizados – Comité del Pueblo district, Quito (ASOTRAB), (Association of Self-Employed Workers, ASOTRAB)

ASOTRAB is a non-profit organization which has for many years fought for the rights of street traders, including to work freely without being subject to what it characterises as the violence and arbitrary decisions committed by the state and police authorities, which can deprive them of their products and of the means to support their families.

In June 2023, the president of the Committee contacted Vista para Todos to ask them to organise a Visual Health Day for the sons and daughters of the members of ASOTRAB. These children are in great need of help, he said, as their families do not have health insurance or the economic means to pay for services such as eye tests or glasses. The Visual Health Day took place on July 27th at the headquarters of ASOTRAB, in the Comité del Pueblo district in the north of Quito. Glasses were given to the young people who needed them on August 4th.



Above: street traders in the Comité del Pueblo area, Quito
Below: waiting for attention in the entrance to the Casa del Pueblo



Sources: ASOTRAB has no webpage, but some information can be found on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AsotrabEc/>

Campaign 6: Santa Maria del Toachi

Organisation visited: The Rural Parish of Santa María del Toachi, in the province of Santo Domingo, to the west of Quito.

Ecuador has an organization of “reinas” (queens), in which most cities, towns and villages participate. Every year a young woman is chosen as a queen, with the primary duty of providing social help in her community. In this case, the 2023 queen of Santa Maria del Toachi, a village in a rural area in the Andes, approached Vista para Todos, asking for support for the young people in the community. This young woman has been working with other young people in the community for several years. As a group, the young people have managed to improve the environment (plant trees, cleaning the riverbank, collecting rubbish etc). The number of participants has been growing and their work is very much appreciated by the village as a whole. This year, the queen has been focusing on trying to improve health services in the village, which has very few local facilities. In order to receive eye care, young people would have to travel for several hours to reach cities which have eye clinics. The poverty in their rural area means that this would be very difficult to organize.

As a result, Vista para Todos organized a visit to Santa Maria del Toachi on August 22nd and 23rd and delivered glasses to the young people who needed them on September 1st.



Campaign 7: Mi Caleta

Organisation visited: Mi Caleta (My Home) [NB Caleta means “cove” in Spanish, but in Ecuador is used to mean a person’s house/home]

Mi Caleta is a project run by the Fundación Proyecto Salesiano Zona Norte Programa Apoyo y Custodia Familiar (The Salesian Project Trust, Northern Zone, Programme of Support and Family Care), ie by the Salesians. Their programme focuses on helping children and young people between six and 18 years old, who are in vulnerable situations, in particular those living on the street. The Trust runs a building in central Quito, where children and young people can learn practical and social skills.

There are no up-to-date figures for the number of street children in Quito or Ecuador, but a survey in 2016 found that 11.1% of children and young people aged between five and 17 years old were not spending all their time studying (ie they were only working/working and studying/neither working nor studying). Many of these children live in desperate situations, with no regular place to live, no health care and little food and drink. It is some of these children who Mi Caleta tries to support.

At the beginning of August, 2023, Mi Caleta asked Vista para Todos if it could help the children and young people it supports by providing free eye tests and, where necessary, glasses. The campaign took place on September 27th, and the glasses were handed over on October 5th.

Nineteen of the 52 children tested needed glasses and two had to be referred for further tests.



Sources: More on Mi Caleta: https://www.usfq.edu.ec/sites/default/files/inline-files/Fundacion_Proyecto_Salesiano_Chicos_de_Calle_Mi_Caleta.pdf

More on working/street children in Ecuador: <https://odna.org.ec/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Situacio%CC%81n-de-la-nin%CC%83ez-y-adolescencia-en-Ecuador-2019.pdf>, <https://solidaridad.net/los-ninos-de-la-calle-en-ecuador-levantemos-la-voz-de-los-sin-voz/>