



Sewing Business Project in Ecuador - Final Report, November 2016

Your ref: 00380: - Project summary:

Finance: Funds agreed by Fondation Eagle: US\$ 16,000 on March 15th 2016.

Funds received by the Condor Trust: US\$9,000 in Quito in March 2016 + £ 5,190.51 in London on July 21st 2016 (transferred to Quito on 25th July 2016 - US\$ 7,000): total US\$ 16,000

Amount spent from Fondation Eagle funds during 2016: \$16,000.

Amount remaining: -

Project aim: To continue to fund workshops (covering sewing and basic business techniques) and materials for 53 women in Quito, Ecuador, with the aim of setting up a clothing business.

The 2016 Project

Background: This is the second stage of a project aiming to give women in Quito, Ecuador, the skills to set up a clothing business, so that they can support their families financially. The first stage was conducted in 2015, and was also funded by Fondation Eagle. In total, 53 low-income people (52 women and one man) attended courses during 2015. In two modules, conducted between February and May and then between June and August 2015, three groups learnt the basics of hand- and machine-sewing and began to make products, including T-shirts, trousers and blouses.

The aim of the second phase, conducted in 2016, was to build on the work in 2015 and bring the women closer to setting up a business to provide them with income.

This is a joint project with a school in Quito (Fundación Niños de María). The school provides the teaching area and additional funds to cover some equipment, administration, electricity and other costs.

The 2016 Project

(1) Learning

The courses began in June 2016 and finished at the end of October 2016 (slightly later than planned, due to staff availability). Three activities took place:

- A group of 9 of the best students from 2016 were selected for intensive further training. These women attended classes twice a week for the five months, learning new sewing techniques and practicing ones they had already learnt in 2015. They focused on pyjamas, baby clothes and T-shirts, as these are considered the most saleable products. These students were also introduced to the basics of business management (the concepts of costs, profit etc).
- A group of 25 students (from the second group who studied in 2015) attended classes once a week, in order to continue the sewing course they began in 2015. They produced T-shirts and blouses, and also some simple shoulder bags which are used by school students in Ecuador.
- Around 20 other students from 2015 attended a weekly drop-in session in order to practice skills they had learnt the previous year, and to ask the sewing teacher for advice on garments they were making.

As in 2015, attendance levels during 2016 were high: 93% for the intensive group ; 91% for the second group.



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The 2016 Project (cont)

(2) Selling

Sales to date: Towards the end of the courses, the women began to sell some of the products they had made. They investigated various outlets:

- Local markets
- A shop in the school where the course takes place
- Local shops.

So far, clothing worth a total of \$2,300 has been sold. Most of this consists of pyjamas and baby clothes, although some shoulder bags and T-shirts have also been sold. The school shop has sold most of these products.

The idea of a local company buying school sports uniform (mentioned in our proposal) has not yet materialised, as the company does not consider the women's sewing yet to be of a consistently high enough standard, but this remains a possibility for the future, if the standard of sewing can be further improved.

Sales in the next few weeks:

- The women and teachers are currently organising sales of products in Christmas bazaars. Many churches and schools hold these at the beginning of December, and we are hopeful of selling pyjamas, baby clothes, T-shirts etc at a number of these in Quito.
- A contact of the Condor Trust has recently set up an online baby products business. She has commissioned some of the women to produce a number of products (cushion covers, baby suits) for sale via her website.



Pyjamas on sale in the school shop



Example of a baby suit



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Assessment

As in 2015, all the course participants gave feedback on the course. The comments were very positive. Typical examples are:

- "I think I've made real progress in the past few weeks. I'm proud of the pyjamas I've made - and really pleased that somebody bought my pyjamas in the school shop!" (Intensive course participant)
- "We work together in the group and help each other improve. I've begun at home to try and make some shirts for my boys" (Participant in second group)
- "It's quite difficult to make something which looks professional, but I think I'm definitely improving" (Intensive course participant).

Financial Breakdown

In total, the project initially had a budget of US\$31,000, of which Fondation Eagle supplied US\$16,000 and Fundación Niños de María, the local foundation in whose premises the courses have taken place, US\$ 15,000. In total, we spent slightly more than this, as the equipment we bought cost more than we had estimated. This was because one of the machines we had planned to buy was no longer available in Ecuador (problems with imports). We therefore bought one more sophisticated machine (rather than the two machines mentioned in the original proposal). We made up the shortfall from local funds.

The funds from Fondation Eagle were spent under three main headings: equipment and material, teaching staff and teaching materials/other.

Notes:

- We spent a total of US\$ 6,500 on machinery (rather than the US\$ 4,000 foreseen in the proposal), but only US\$ 4,000 came from the Fondation Eagle budget.
- Personnel costs consisted largely of payment to the main course tutor (US\$ 3,750), with the additional \$250 spent on teaching the intensive group how to calibrate the new sewing machine (in order to avoid the costs of getting an outside professional to do this in future).

Breakdown of Expenditure of Funds from Fondation Eagle, June to October 2016

Unit: US\$	
Teaching staff	4,000
Equipment	4,000
Materials (cloth etc)	7,500
Teaching materials/other	500
TOTAL	16,000



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Results

From the point of view of the participants, the 2016 project has been a great success. As in 2015, all students say they have improved their **knowledge and sewing skills**, and all have been able to make garments which they and their families can wear. The lemon shirts which the students wear to the classes (see photo below) are also made by themselves. All the students to some extent, but particularly those in the intensive group, have been able to sell some of their products.

Financially, the results have so far been modest: a total of US\$ 2,300. This money has gone back to the project, enabling the group to buy a press stud (snap fastener) machine and to cover additional costs incurred by the school. As the women are understandably keen to begin to earn income, however, they have initially been given vouchers to buy items from the school shop for every garment which has been sold – something they seem to be very happy about. As soon as sales volumes increase and costs can be covered, the women will earn money directly.



Next stages

In order for this to become a real business, covering costs and producing a profit for the women, the standard of sewing needs to be consistently higher (eg totally straight seams, perfect joins etc). This is essentially a question of practice, according to the teaching staff.

Once this standard is reached by some of the women, the possibilities for sales should increase greatly. These would include commissions from local business (as mentioned above) and greater enthusiasm in shops, markets and online to accept the products.

We are currently working on a plan to give the women daily access to the sewing machines, so they can practice regularly, and also on a clearer financial plan for production and sales in 2017.

Some of the women working at “Hilando mi Futuro” (Sewing my Future), the name given to this project locally.

Sewing Project in Quito, Ecuador, 2016



Above & left:
Course work and
garments.
Below:
New machinery

