



Sewing Business in Ecuador - Final Report, November 2018

Your ref: 452/022: Project summary:

This is Year 4 of a project to help a group of women in Quito, Ecuador, set up a clothing business. Donations from Fondation Eagle in 2015 and 2016 enabled the Condor Trust to organise workshops and training for 53 women from a very low-income community, known as La Comuna, in order to learn how to produce clothing which they can sell. Progress was good, but most of the women needed further training and practice to become proficient enough to start a business.

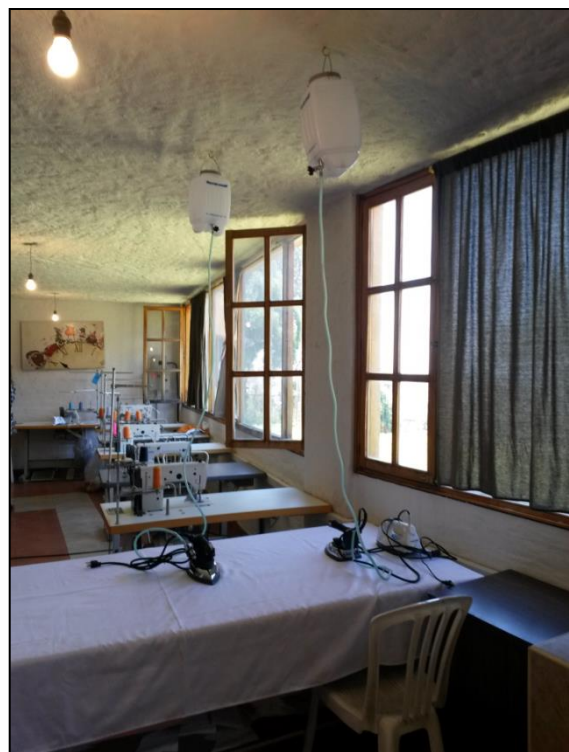
In July 2017, Fondation Eagle made a further grant of US\$ 5,000 to fund materials and staff for six months, in order to help the women reach a sufficiently high standard to make this a viable business.



Progress from September 2017 to October 2018

As reported in November 2017, from the beginning of September, a new teacher came forward to undertake the training and practice sessions. She is a professional woman who designs and makes wedding dresses in Quito, and within a few weeks, she re-vitalised the project and came up with new sales ideas.

Between September 2017 and March 2018, the women practiced regularly under her supervision. The classroom was also remodelled to include ironing facilities (see left), and a generally tidier and more organised working environment.



Unfortunately, the teacher had to move away from Quito in April 2018, and we have not yet been able to find a replacement.





Production and Sales

The new teacher identified a niche which does not seem to be filled in Quito: personalised uniforms for medical staff, ie overalls/coats with the name of the hospital and the name of the person embroidered on them.

The women are therefore practicing making these garments to a high standard, using materials purchased with some of the money from Fondation Eagle. Unfortunately, the teacher left before any contracts could be signed with hospitals, and the administrator has been left to try and follow up on leads. No firm sales have yet materialised from hospitals, although we are continuing to pursue leads.

In the meantime, some of the women are continuing to work on simple dresses and T-shirts for children, which are now being sold regularly to other mothers in the area.

In addition, the group has been able to make and sell products such as individualised aprons for use by housemaids and at events, such as a food fair in Quito in summer 2018 (see left).

During autumn 2018, the women have been working on T-shirts and aprons with seasonal patterns, for sale at the many pre-Christmas sales in Quito.



Summary of Project

This stage of the project has gone well, in the sense that the women have been able to practice their sewing and have on the whole become more proficient and professional. In the period between September 2017 and March 2018, they had excellent teaching, which led to this improvement in sewing quality and also provided great motivation. From April onwards, the women have continued to come to the school regularly to practice and make the garments described above, but we have not been able to provide any professional supervision. This has necessarily slowed down further improvements.

The loss of the teacher before any sales contracts had been finalised was a blow to the project, and has meant that income has failed to rise to the levels we had hoped for. Small amounts of income have been earned from the activities outlined above, but the project is not yet generating enough income to be self-sustaining.

We have been looking hard for a replacement teacher and/or salesperson who can help us take the project forward, but have not yet been able to find any suitable professional or volunteer helpers.



Financial Summary

We used all the US\$5,000 provided by Fondation Eagle by April 2018. Since then, we have been able to continue the project by using the materials and equipment acquired before then, and by continuing to use the premises of the school which is a partner in the project, and where the women continue to sew.

The funds were used as follows:

Financial Summary (in US\$)			
	Amount originally requested	Amount actually spent	Difference
Materials (mainly cloth & thread)	2,500	2,516	+16
Staff	2,000	2,200	+200
Other (maintenance: US\$185; machine accessories: US\$280)	500	465	-35
TOTAL	5,000	5,181	+181

As agreed with the women earlier, the small amount of income so far earned from the sale of clothes has mostly gone to the women who produced the garments, with a small amount re-invested to cover running costs.

The Future

Despite the recent set-back, the project is continuing, and we are looking strenuously for other ways to progress. The majority of the women remain very keen to succeed in what they have started, and although they would of course like a higher income from their efforts, they are nonetheless pleased to have some small income and to be able to make clothes for their families and friends.

We are exploring different ways of finding both a dedicated teacher and other staff or volunteers who can spend time developing sales channels, and hope to be able report on positive progress soon.