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# Bridging the Gap

## Final Report – Narrative Section Ecuador

September 2021





## Executive summary

The project in Ecuador achieved the vast majority of its intended outputs and outcomes, resulting in significant improvements to inclusive education in the country.

During the project, AECID and its partners created some of the very first accessible materials for the mass inclusion of children with disabilities in the regular education system. These state-of-the-art inclusive materials are now distributed across the country by the joint collaboration of the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Education and CONADIS. Among these educational products are several remarkable ones that have outstanding potential for inclusive education at the regional level.

The creation of the first educational products for children with disabilities in Ecuador is in itself a milestone for the rights of deaf persons in Ecuador. Within these however, the Educative Ecuadorian Sign Language Dictionary deserves a particular praise. This product was created from scratch along with children with hearing disabilities and a nationwide group of deaf Scholars, aiming not only at achieving inclusive representation, but also at providing a tool that is extremely useful for teachers and children without disabilities. This joyful but deep product will allow for learning Ecuadorian Sign Language in an early educative setting, allowing every children to learn ESL from an early stage and fostering inclusive communication for all children and community members.

The *Así Aprendo* collection for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities is not only the first of its kind in the region and in Spanish language worldwide, but has already become a product of reference internationally on how to design and develop accessible materials that completely adapt and follow national curricula. This collection was shortlisted in the Zero Award Project prize in 2020, with FEPAPDEM participating at the 2020 Vienna Award Ceremony. This collection, produced entirely by Ecuadorian civil society experts in intellectual disability and inclusive education, accentuates the outstanding technical capabilities present in the Latin American region. It also presents a significant opportunity for expanding its scope to all Spanish-speaking countries.

Over 2.500 teachers and educative institutions personnel have attended the trainings and seminars implemented by Bridging the Gap Ecuador, with the majority of the trainings being available online, fostering replicability and further outreach.

DPOs and government partner organizations have improved their technical and organizational capabilities and knowledge for policy influencing and advancement of inclusive education and the rights of persons with disabilities, actively participating in national discussions and international funding calls and development projects.





In particular, the project supported DPO efforts in international networking and increasing the relevance of disability topics in the strategic agendas and protocols of international cooperation actors. For AECID and Ecuador, this crystallized in several milestones. First, the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities for the joint strengthening of inclusive education in the country, setting a good practice on how to develop accessible materials and training. Second, the support to partner organizations in their policy influencing capabilities, from the participation in international and shadow reports, to the contributions of CONADIS to the debate on the modifications of the Organic Law of Education at the National Assembly. Third, the project achieved the creation of international DPO networking, allowing Ecuadorian DPOs to establish working relations with significant organizations particularly in Spain, including *Grupo Social ONCE*, *COCEMFE*, National Confederation of Deaf Persons, and *Plena Inclusión*, as well as international NGOs and other international organizations like UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA. Lastly, and of particular relevance for AECID and other international donors in Ecuador, Bridging the Gap led to have inclusive education and employment of persons with disabilities a key Objective of the 2019-2022 Country Association Framework between the Governments of Spain and Ecuador. This document, governing the international development relations of the two countries, steers the cooperation policy for Spanish development actors, and through its existence, several projects regarding rights of persons with disabilities are now under implementation.

Bridging the Gap also undertook specific actions after the outbreak of the COVID pandemic for supporting persons with disabilities. Alongside its partner organizations, the project sponsored the donation of bio-safety kits for persons with disabilities in five provinces of Ecuador, COVID information in Easy-Reading format, and provided direct financial support to the COSORI Language Mediation system. Through this, Bridging the Gap provided the possibility of accessing completely free live interpretation services for persons with hearing disabilities at any given time until January 2021. Lastly, the project supported CONADIS in the production of the animated series “Teo & Bujía”, screened at national level and through internet, aimed at children with disabilities.

The project underwent several challenges for its timely implementation, including the devastating effects of the pandemic, with the main focus of the project being inclusive education for children. Despite the obstacles encountered, AECID and its partner organizations, whether direct beneficiaries or necessary collaborators, managed to achieve the intended results, notably surpassing target indicators, while spending over 90% of the total allocated budget.





## Project results – Check against indicators

See logical framework's Excel in Annex. I.LogFrame

## Description of the project activities carried out

### Outcome 1

There is no Outcome 1 in the Country Action Plan for Ecuador, which directly translates in no output and outcome indicators for this Outcome in the LogFrame for the Ecuadorian intervention.

However, while there has not been any specific activity namely carried out under this Outcome, throughout the project implementation several achievements certainly could fall under this epigraph, since Bridging the Gap project created positive ripples regarding disability and international development cooperation.

In this sense, the most notable impact the project has had is regarding AECID development cooperation strategy in the country. The *Marco Asociación País – MAP* (Country Association Framework) is the official high-level document ruling the state international development relations and commitments between Spain and Ecuador. In 2019, thanks to the implementation of Bridging the Gap in the country, the new MAP 2019-2022 included two specific intervention lines in both inclusive education, and access to employment for persons with disabilities. The MAP mandates the areas of bilateral Spanish cooperation fund allocation, as well as providing a framework for other decentralized Spanish agencies and NGOs to prioritize works and projects in the country. Two projects regarding these intervention lines are currently under implementation in Ecuador.

Through the traction of Bridging the Gap project, AECID became an official member of the Global Action on Disability Network – GLAD, on July 2019.

Lastly, it is important to note the several commitments of AECID in relation to disability in international cooperation:

- The important contribution to the “We Decide” UNFPA Program, which in Ecuador resulted in the publishing of the Guide on Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Violence Free Life for Persons with Disabilities on 2018 with CONADIS.



- The programming of specific disability related courses on its Training Centre network in Latin America, most notably at its Montevideo Centre. Personnel and directives from Bridging the Gap partner institutions have attended these expert training courses on several occasions during the project implementation.
- The publishing in 2018 of the Guide for Disability Inclusion in Development Cooperation Projects, which provides the methodological framework for achieving inclusive projects and programs in the countries of intervention.

Bridging the Gap Ecuador contributed both, technically and financially, to the support of global, PMU and KM communication and visibility activities. Among others, AECID project personnel contributed to the organization and implementation of the Learning Space Quito, held in May 2019, supporting logistical and networking works for its successful completion. AECID project personnel organized the visit of Christian Tasso to Ecuador for the production of the Bridging the Gap photobook, including participant selection and travel and logistics.

Lastly, Bridging the Gap Ecuador contributed financially to the accessibility of several global events and communication products, financing international and Ecuadorian Sign Language interpretation, live captioning services, as well as language translations and the physical reproduction of global studies in Spanish.

All corresponding information and verification sources are in Annex 1. Global\_PMU\_KM.

Picture 01. Ecuador MAP 2019-2022



Picture 02. AECID at GLAD Network website



Picture 03. Support to Bridging the Gap Photobook



## Outcome 2

### General information and instrument description

Outcome 2 comprises all the activities implemented with, and benefitting, the National Council for Equality on Disabilities (Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de Discapacidades – CONADIS), the governmental body in charge of overseeing, monitoring and evaluating the national policies in regards to the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

For the achievement of the output and outcome indicators proposed in the LogFrame, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID),



directly implemented all the funds allocated for this Outcome and beneficiary institution. Under the leadership of Bridging the Gap II's Country Manager, as staff from the Technical Office in Ecuador (OTC Ecuador), and the contracted technical and administrative assistance personnel, in coordination with CONADIS authorities and mandated personnel, all the proposed activities were successfully completed during the implementation phase of the project.

In order to implement the activities and the allocated funds, AECID signed an In-kind State Grant on December 3, 2018, officially accepted by the beneficiary on December, 7 2018, marking the official start of the Outcome 2 implementation phase. This grant, coded No. 2018/SPE/0000400248 under Spanish Cooperation and Grant legislative body, considered a total amount of 60.180 euros.

Out of this amount, 54.000 euros correspond to Project funds, integrally financed from the financial contribution from the European Union. The remaining amount, 6.180 euros, correspond to additional funding provided outside of the Action agreement to finance VAT expenses, which were non-eligible costs in Ecuador.

It is important to note that at the time of signature of the Grant, CONADIS had already requested project changes concerning the original Country Action Plan as well as the LogFrame. These changes were presented for approval in the Steering Committee held in Madrid in November 2018, and the Grant awarded to CONADIS already included the amended LogFrame and its pertaining activities.

In order to evaluate the requested changes, AECID requested a technical justification prior to the signing of the In-Kind Grant stating the institutional need for the increase in equipment acquisition, especially regarding the implementation of an IT server for the institution. CONADIS provided the requested justification, referencing Memorandum No. CONADIS–CONADIS–2018–0157–M, where at the time Technical Secretary Mg. Tatiana Rosero mandates the development and establishment of a software and a dedicated unit for the monitoring and evaluation of public policy regarding disabilities in Ecuador (Annex 2.1.GENERAL).

As part of the COVID reprogramming, Activity 5.3. *COVID19. Production of educommunicational materials for COVID19 sensibilization* was added following official request from CONADIS. The total economic resources devoted for the achievement Outcome 2 at the end of the implementation phase amounts to 53.949,83 euros.



## Chronological Activity Description

2018

### Activity 5.3.2 Establishment of communicational studio for the production of accessible materials for students with disabilities

The activity contemplated the acquisition of audio & film equipment requested by the beneficiary for the establishment of a communicational studio, improving the existing institutional capabilities for the production of accessible media content, as well as strengthening the technical quality of regularly mandated CONADIS activities, and its supporting role towards other governmental institutions in terms of accessible communications and PR.

Since its completion, CONADIS has been effectively using the provided equipment on their daily operations up to date, in terms of design, recording, edition and production of accessible materials and institutional information, including graphic design for the Manual of disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments for government institutions.

The total list of equipment provided is included in Annex 2.Act5.3.2, along with all verification sources regarding this activity.

Picture 04. Official handing of equipment at Launch Event



Picture 05. Equipment in use





2019

### Activity 5.3.1 Manual of disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments for government institutions

The present activity included the complete production of the Manual on disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments for government institutions, from its inception and content elaboration, design and its publishing in physical, printed copies.

In order to achieve the required outputs, this activity required to contractual procedures, under the modality of minor contracts according to Spanish legislation due to their financial volume and allocated funds:

- Elaboration and design of the referred Manual
- Printing of the physical copies of the Manual

In terms of project design, this activity precedes *Activity 5.2. Training activities for public servants and educators in new disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments*, since the training activity was designed as a follow-up to the production of this Manual for maximizing the potential impact of the publication with specific, expert training on the contents and use of the information and techniques developed within this product. Due to this close link, the Terms of Reference for the Manual elaboration contract already included the trainings, with the



rationale that the expert who created the manual would be the best professional possible to also provide the expert training for the selected beneficiaries since it was the one who developed the content, methodology and structure of the Manual.

For the full design of the Manual, the project personnel selected and asked for a proposal to three international experts on Easy Reading and cognitive accessibility, resulting in the selection of Ms. Rosa Antolín Marsal. Ms. Antolín is a Spanish expert on the topic, having worked for PlenaInclusión Extremadura and OTAEX (Technical Office for Accessibility of the Government of Extremadura) among others, who had also previous experience working in Ecuador and particularly with CONADIS following up a technical assistance on cognitive accessibility in early 2019, unrelated to Bridging the Gap project.

The ToR for this activity, launched on July 2019, with the contract formalized on August 26, 2019. The Guide requirements consisted on the complete design of a 60 page Manual that included, non-exclusively, the following academic contents:

- Cognitive Accessibility
- Communication for and with persons with disabilities
- Easy Reading
- 

The consultant successfully delivered the Manual in accordance to the contractual schedule, approved on October 2019.

In October, in order to finalize this and its concurrent training activity on the year 2019, the competitive process for the physical printing of the Manual was launched. After the successful reception of four offers out of seven requested, the contract for the production of 2.400 units was awarded to AndinaGraph S.L. in accordance to the Terms of Reference, starting on October 31, 2019. Production being swift and uneventful, on November 5<sup>th</sup>, a week prior to the start of the trainings, AECID Ecuador and the project personnel delivered the printed Manuals to CONADIS.

It is important to note that, while a concise document, it is the first Guide that addresses accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities, and provides a basic instrument for the diffusion of Easy-Reading methodology throughout Government institutions, which CONADIS is actively advocating and pushing for. Since its development, the Manual has been in use, and is available through both the project and CONADIS websites<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consejodiscapacidades.gob.ec/manual-de-facil-lectura-y-formatos-accesibles/>





All the verification sources, including ToR, contracts and products are in Annex 2.Act5.3.1.

Picture 06. Manual at CONADIS website



Picture 07. Manual in physical format





## Activity 5.2. Training activities for public servants and educators in new disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments

As noted in the previous activity, the training for public servants was a part of the same contract for the elaboration of the Manual, with the author selected for the facilitation of the workshops.

In terms of activity design, including duration, participants and geographical determination of the trainings, CONADIS (as the beneficiary entity) conducted the selection of trainees and the invitation process.

The trainings for public servants, communicators and CONADIS personnel in the Manual of Easy-Reading and Accessible Formats was successfully accomplished according to plan, exceeding the target goal to a 140% result.

The training included a general overview of Accessibility issues, including Cognitive Accessibility notions. It has been largely considered a major success, spawning praise and interest from many Government and High Education institutions. Facilitated by Ms. Rosa Antolín, the trainings comprised two 48-hour long instalments (6 days of training per workshop, 8 hours per day) in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil in November 2019, and reached 84 trainees between both cities.

Following a joint analysis from CONADIS and BtG-II EC personnel, the trainees were selected among CONADIS personnel from all units in the country, key institutions such as MINEDUC and INEVAL, and most notably, teachers and professors from relevant nation-wide High Education public institutions.

This is due to:

- a) Highly unstable nature of civil servant jobs in Ecuador, with an extremely high rotation in high technical, middle, and high directorial positions,
- b) Centralization of Government communications through SECOM,
- c) CONADIS mandate of reviewing and providing accessibility for governmental communications, and



d) Manifest interest from High Education institutions in advancing in inclusive education, as well as incorporating Accessibility to their curricula and formats.

In terms of budgetary considerations, the completion of this activity contemplated expenses in budget headlines 2 and 5 for local transportation and participants' per-diems, as well as professional services, catering and workshop materials, for 11.629,50 euros.

All the required information, including a final report on the process, as well as the lists of attendance and all the required verification sources are available in Annex 2.Act5.2.

Picture 08. Workshop Opening at CONADIS Main Building, Quito



Picture 09. Quito workshop<sup>2</sup>



Picture 10. CONADIS Twitter post on Guayaquil workshop<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://lahora.com.ec/loja/noticia/1102285752/conadis-apuesta-por-guia-de-lectura-facil->

<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/conadisecu/status/1196441429721198592>



2020

### Activity 5.3.3 COVID19. Production of educommunicational materials for COVID19 sensibilization

In 2020, all projected activities for Outcome 2 were finished, with the exception of acquisition of equipment, with 3.777,83 euros remaining in their respective budget headings.

By the time the first yearly deposit was available in Ecuador for implementation, the COVID pandemic had already burst, with strong confinement measures undertaken globally, including Ecuador since the 17<sup>th</sup> of May of 2020.

After the initial confinement months and the reprogramming work undertaken along with CONADIS, the partner institution requested to use the available funds to help produce two chapters of an accessible animated series aimed at children with disabilities for raising awareness and information on the COVID19 virus, and educating on biosafety measures.

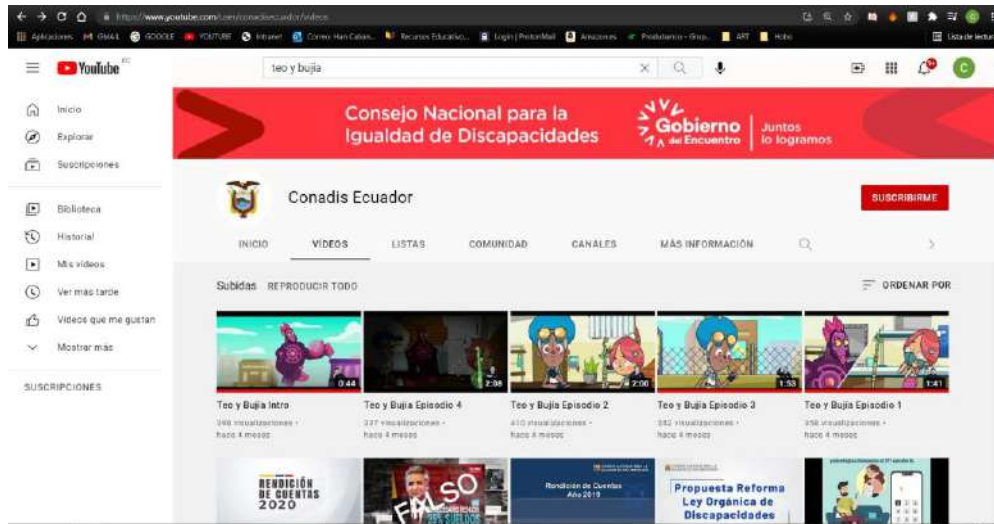
The series used previously designed characters “Teo & Bujía”, a kid with a physical disability and its cybernetic guinea pig pet, along with an ensemble of characters designed for visibility and equal representation of persons with disabilities. Bridging the Gap project contributed by financing the production of two out of five total episodes of the series, which also received funding from other international donors, such as the Red Cross.

The activity concluded on December 2020, with episodes airing from February 2021 onwards<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.consejodiscapacidades.gob.ec/conadis-presenta-proyecto-para-promover-los-derechos-de-ninos-y-ninas-con-discapacidad/>

The episodes are accessible on [CONADIS YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/user/conadisecuador/videos)<sup>5</sup> as well as in Annex 2.Act5.3.3 along with all verification sources for this activity.

Picture 11. Screenshot of Teo & Bujía on CONADIS YouTube channel



Picture 12. Screenshot of Teo & Bujía: Episode 3



2021

Activity 5.1. Hardware and training requirements for the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system for indicators in inclusive education

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/user/conadisecuador/videos>



CONADIS received the requested server, alongside IT equipment for the personnel of the in-house team in charge of statistics and public policy indicators monitoring.

As stated in the III Yearly Report 2019-2020, the server was expected to be donated by the end of 2020. However, due to the impact of the pandemic, the activity could not be fulfilled in the proposed timeframe, completing the acquisition and installation at the end of the implementation phase, being the system operational since July 2021.

Regarding the process for the fulfilment of this activity, AECID and the project personnel in Ecuador held several meetings with CONADIS since 2019 in order to link the beneficiary institution with OHCHR. This aimed to establish a direct connection between CONADIS, as BtG-II beneficiary, with OHCHR, the UN agency in charge of implementing the design of indicators for the CDPD and the 2030 Agenda, for the pilot test of applicable indicators. This initiative was discontinued due to the lack of engagement from CONADIS, as well as internal delays on the production of the monitoring and evaluation software.

As stated in the General considerations for Outcome 2, CONADIS personnel developed the software for which the institution requested the server. With the mandated establishment of this in-house team, CONADIS ensures its sustainability after the Project conclusion in accordance to its mandate, which will allow for the elaboration of consistent reporting on the selected indicators, and presenting them in accessible formats due to the synergies with the other activities completed for this Outcome.

In relation to the acquisition process, both administrative procedures and the delay in software development did not allow for the purchase in 2019, and then the COVID pandemic in 2020, alongside with the request from CONADIS to also provide IT equipment for its personnel, were the main reasons for finalizing the implementation of this activity in 2021.

After a competitive process, the personnel at OTC AECID Ecuador selected the offer presented by SynergyHard S.A. in accordance to the requisites and evaluation procedures set on the ToR. Due to the effects of the pandemic in the global distribution system, and in particular in the current ongoing lack of chips and specialized informatics equipment worldwide, the provider requested an extension of the contract in order to be able to fulfil its agreement through official notification on June 2021.

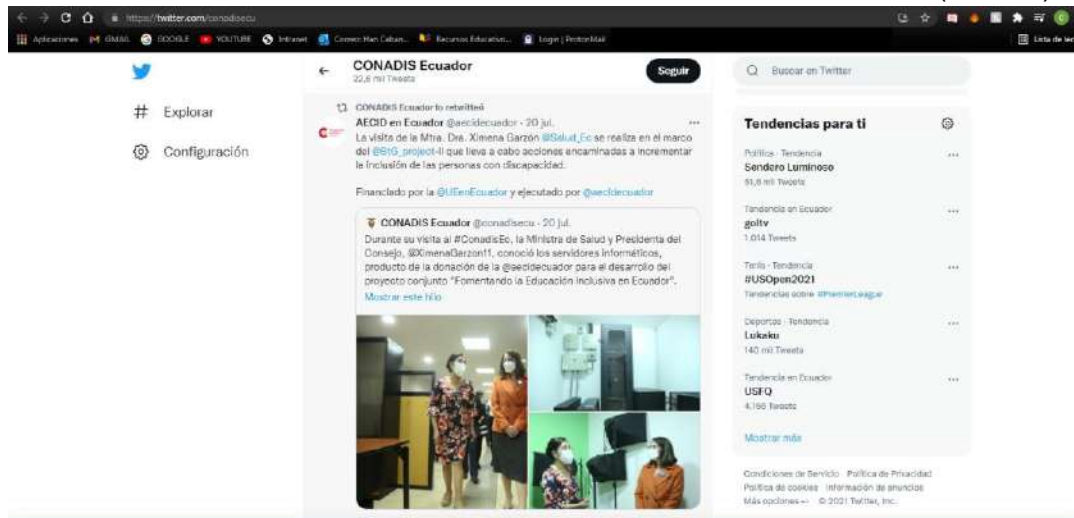




Taking into account the importance of this activity, both in technical and financial terms, AECID granted the requested extension. The installation of the server and the delivery of the additional IT equipment requested finalised the 23rd of July 2021. Following the change in national government on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May of 2021, the 20<sup>th</sup> of July the new President of CONADIS, Health Minister Ms. Ximena Garzón visited CONADIS facilities and inspected all the equipment donated through Bridging the Gap project.

The total list of equipment provided is included in Annex 2.Act5.1, along with all verification sources regarding this activity.

Picture 13. Ms. Ximena Garzón, Health Minister, visits CONADIS (Twitter)



Picture 14. Server



Picture 15. IT Equipment



### Output and Outcome Indicators

The figures regarding the achievement of Output and Outcome indicators appear on the attached LogFrame template in the Project results corresponding chapter, as well as the required synthetic description. This section gives a brief overview of the achieved results in terms of indicator achievement, as well as a larger background on the level of achievement accomplished.



## Output Indicators

Regarding Output indicators, as shown in the annexed LogFrame, the project reached 100% on each indicator, reaching 168% on the proposed indicator for Activity 5.2 Training activities for public servants and educators in new disability-friendly education and communication policies and instruments; No. of communicators and educators trained.

By making the training available to high education teachers and professors from universities with inclusive and specialized education programs via a 48-hour course, the project fostered knowledge on cognitive accessibility, both theoretical and practical, beyond its original intended scope. Paired with the nationwide distribution and free online access of the Manual on Easy-Reading and accessible formats, fostering a greater knowledge on how to implement accessible formats for the inclusion on persons with disabilities.

CONADIS is now able to provide expert technical support to other governmental institutions seeking to develop accessible formats. While high education institutions were not the focus of the project in Ecuador, their inclusion within the training process can have a stronger positive impact on the medium run. Since new teachers will now have a deeper knowledge on what accessibility means, as well as having tools to implement accessible formats and using Easy Reading as a methodological tool for developing cognitively accessible materials, future teachers will be better equipped to implement inclusive education practices in their regular educative units in their classrooms.

## Outcome Indicators

In terms of achievement of the Outcome indicators proposed, as shown in the LogFrame, the results effectively reached the intended 100% in all the proposed indicators, yet this achievement is transversal due to the actual produced outcomes, which deviate from the original intended scope of resulting materials.

This was due to several situations encountered throughout the implementation process, and this epigraph aims to shed some light as on why these fell short.

Firstly, due to CONADIS institutional mandate, it plays a transversal role in all disability-related policymaking and implementation, but holds no direct powers regarding inclusive education or its implementation, falling directly under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Education.





Secondly, the delay in the implementation of the software for monitoring and evaluation of public policy indicators, paired with the delay in the establishment of the server and the monitoring team. As explained previously in this chapter, the failure to establish a working relation between CONADIS and Bridging the Gap I meant that the project could not test the education specific indicators developed by OHCHR, which provided a great opportunity to, not only expand the scope of the project, but to actually produce a potentially valuable set of statistics and data.

Last, but not least, the impact of the COVID pandemic, which affected the implementation calendar, as well as shifting the institutional focus in order to cater for the sensitization and communication needs regarding the pandemic for persons with disabilities.

However, there certainly were positive achievements in regards to Outcomes, as shown in the LogFrame and its synthetic description. All supporting evidence and sources of verification appear on Annex 2.Outcomes.

### Development and dissemination by CONADIS of policy papers/products/materials to influence in Inclusive Education Public Policy in Ecuador among public institutions

The Manual on Easy Reading and accessible formats, distributed nationwide and available to every government institution feeds this indicator perfectly. Paired with the established capabilities at CONADIS for producing accessible formats, it will allow for the improvement of accessible formats and communication at governmental level.

During 2019, CONADIS underwent a nationwide evaluation of the different DECE (Departments for Student Counselling) and UDAI (District Units for Inclusion Support). This allows the Ministry of Education and civil society organizations at large to identify existing deficiencies and bottlenecks, as well as existing good practices at the local level regarding the support for the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education models, fostering the effective implementation of inclusive education in Ecuador.

### Nº. of new plans/products/reports to enhance inclusive education and enrolment of children with disabilities

CONADIS contributed to the legislative debate on the reform of the Organic Law for Intercultural Education (*Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural*) at the National Assembly, actively participating on the legislative drafting process by identifying physical, societal and pedagogical barriers within the Education System in order to



achieve a real inclusive education. It included actively proposing the progressive transition towards a psycho-pedagogical Resource Centre model.

Picture 16. CONADIS post on official website<sup>6</sup>



Nº of contributions made and/or policy and/or analytical papers adapted to easy-reading or other accessible formats

This indicator changed in the last LogFrame amendment (November 2020).

Despite its transformation in the last LogFrame amendment, it is important to note that the project activities and their outputs contributed greatly to increasing CONADIS capabilities for the production of accessible materials and communications. With the creation and equipment of a new communicational studio, paired with the specific work on Easy Reading and accessible formats, CONADIS is now able to produce better accessible materials.

Since the conclusion of activities 5.2 and 5.3 in November 2019, CONADIS produced accessible videos on 1) Affirmative action measures, 2) Instructive for consultation of

<sup>6</sup>Full National Assembly 692

Session: <https://www.facebook.com/asambleanacional/videos/869379477194623/>

El Universo, online article: <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/politica/asamblea-nacional-cierra-segundo-debate-reformas-ley-educacion-intercultural-nota/>



nationwide health units, and 3) Accessible Guide for COVID19 prevention and attention for persons with disabilities<sup>7</sup>.

## General conclusions on Outcome 2

The project successfully achieved the proposed outputs for Outcome 2, and CONADIS proved to be a reliable partner, with ample technical capabilities, as well as proven expertise and a sound personnel structure.

However, due to the scope of the project in the country, targeting not only education but also specifically the inclusion of children with disabilities in the early stages of formal education, a lingering feeling remains that the chosen partner may not have been the sole ideal partner for the general objectives of the program for this Outcome.

This is not to say that CONADIS should not have been the proposed partner, but instead, that Outcome 2 in Ecuador could have been larger in scope, and including from the very beginning the Ministry of Education.

CONADIS, per institutional design, holds no real policymaking capabilities but observance, support and analysis of public policies and their impact, having a consultant role in the design of policies at legislative level, but not at executive level.

CONADIS works closely with any public institution aiming at establishing protocols and tools for the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities, and provides constant support in terms of accessibility analysis, both physical and now, thanks to the joint work done with Bridging the Gap II, cognitive accessibility as well, including accessible communications at governmental level.

Its educational aspect focuses on providing trainings and expertise in general aspects regarding persons with disabilities, but due to the localized scope of the project to inclusive education for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education should have also been considered as a direct partner for this Outcome.

In terms of financial allocation, as noted in the general introduction to this chapter, Outcome 2 received barely 7.8% of the total budget for Ecuador Country Action Plan. For the proposed indicators, this amount was enough to implement the proposed activities, strengthening the technical and institutional capabilities of CONADIS.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBa9pSuDNQYTTqRXfh0yWNX-LwR\\_R4QIQ](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBa9pSuDNQYTTqRXfh0yWNX-LwR_R4QIQ)





However, at country level, the perception at the end of the implementation phase is that its impact in terms of the advancing of inclusive education in Ecuador is limited, in relation to the institutional mandate and capabilities.

Following the Presidential elections on 2020, the new Cabinet took office the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, resulting in the complete change in directive personnel at CONADIS, including the Presidency and the Technical Secretariat. This change is relevant in the Ecuadorian context since the former President of CONADIS, Mr. Xavier Torres Correa, is a worldwide know figure among Disability policy. Mr. Torres was in charge of CONADIS for the previous 8 years, coming from civil society as the founder of FENEDIF, the National Federation of Ecuadorians with Physical Disabilities, and even being a former member of the UN Committee on the CDPD, and being a close Cabinet member to former President Lenín Moreno. While controversial at times, he undoubtedly provided deep knowledge regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities and fierce advocacy for the advancement in the implementation of the CRPD in Ecuador.

The new Cabinet appointed the current Health Minister, Ms. Ximena Garzón, as President of CONADIS. While the change occurred at the end of the project, the lengthy internal process did not help with the achievement of all the proposed Outcome indicators, as well as sprouting civil society disconformity out of the perception that allocating the National Council for Disabilities once again under the Ministry of Health could imply a retraction towards medical models on disability.

While this is seen by AECID as highly unlikely after the impulse of inclusive policies and the preeminent role that the Republic of Ecuador held in the inception and approval of the CRPD, it was certainly seen with scepticism at DPO level, prompting small-but-permanent demonstrations of persons with disabilities<sup>8</sup>.

Currently, CONADIS is undergoing an evaluation on their National Agenda on Disabilities 2017-2021 in order to identify lessons learnt that will help in drafting the upcoming National Agenda.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pichinchacomunicaciones.com.ec/personas-con-discapacidad-cumplen-14-dias-de-huelga-de-hambre-en-quito/>  
<https://www.prodh.org/2021/08/24/huelga-hambre-personas-discapacidad/>  
<https://twitter.com/conadisecu/status/1425588603200147462>





## Outcome 3

### General Information

Outcome 3 comprises all the activities implemented with, and benefitting, the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities (FENASEC, FENCE, FENEDIF, FEPAPDEM), the selected partner DPO representative organizations.

For the achievement of the output and outcome indicators proposed in the LogFrame, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), directly implemented the 65.76% the funds allocated for this Outcome. This included the budgeted Human Resources for the project technical and administrative coordination in Ecuador. Under the leadership of Bridging the Gap II's two Country Managers as staff from the Technical Office in Ecuador (OTC Ecuador) and the contracted technical and administrative assistance personnel, in coordination with the National Federations and the Ministry of Education, the vast majority of the activities were successfully completed. Its outputs and outcomes largely exceeded target indicators.

The model initially proposed by AECID for the implementation of the Action in Ecuador, presented to the European Commission and the partners in the European consortium, was, since November 2016, the implementation through international disability organizations present in Ecuador, and with whom AECID already had a long history of cooperation and joint work. Since January 2017, once the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement had been signed, AECID started to draw up contracts under this implementation scheme. In March 2017, National Partners (Disability Federations and CONADIS), AECID and the European Union Delegation in Ecuador presented the project to the Minister of Education himself, who admitted Ministry's interest in the project, and assured joint work and coordination with the Under-secretariat of Inclusive Education.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September of 2017, FIIAPP PMU communicated AECID the impossibility of implementing the project in Ecuador through a contract with an international disability organization. This decision paralyzed an administrative procedure that had already been in process for several months. CAP Ecuador had been rethought based on new instruments, with the decision that OTC AECID Ecuador should directly manage country's activities not included by the Sub-grants to the National Federations.







In order to implement the activities and the allocated funds, AECID then designed and awarded an In-kind State Grant the 2nd of July of 2018, officially accepted by the four beneficiaries the 11th of July of 2018, marking the official start of the Outcome 3 implementation phase for AECID.

The In-Kind Grant is the main legal instrument that supports direct project implementation by AECID of cooperation funds in intervention countries. This grant, coded No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 under Spanish Cooperation and Grant legislative body, considered a total amount of 464.895 euros.

Out of this amount, 420.840 euros correspond to Project funds, financed through the contributions from both the European Union and AECID. The remaining amount, 44.055 euros, correspond to additional funding provided outside of the Action agreement to finance VAT expenses, which were non-eligible costs in Ecuador due to the particular conditions for reimbursement that the Ecuadorian IRS contemplates.

This In-Kind Grant, being the major financial and legal instrument for project implementation, has been amended following project changes and reprograms, remaining active until the end of the capitalization and reporting phase at country level, concluding on October, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021.

All activity changes are detailed on the corresponding section of the Chapter. All relevant sources of verification are in Annex 3.General.

### Sub-grant implementation

This chapter covers the Sub-grant implementation process, as well as the main financial figures regarding these instruments. It includes the description of additional activities implemented with resulting financial remnants following the successful implementation. Specific COVID activities appear on the dedicated COVID Impact chapter. Since the project design divided activity implementation between In-Kind Grants and Sub-grants to beneficiary DPOs, the description of all LogFrame activities appears in the following Chronological Activity Description section.

As a general consideration, the decision to use Sub-grants for direct DPO implementation was a success, allowing for DPO ownership and design according to the real need of their constituent persons with disabilities, but strengthening civil society organizations in their autonomy and technical capabilities as proficient actors for the advancement of inclusive education in Ecuador.





The project design considered the creation of four Sub-grants, with a total funding of 215.999 euros from both European Union and AECID project funds. As mentioned on the previous General information section, AECID contributed with additional funding outside of the DCI-HUM/2016/379-983 Agreement for financially supporting the existing tax costs, not eligible under the Grant Agreement conditions due to Ecuador fiscal legislation, making those costs recoverable. In practice, VAT recovery procedures, when approved, last an average of two to three years following project end. This is important in terms of Sub-grant funding dispositions under Spanish International Development Cooperation and Grants Laws, since they oblige sub-grant recipients to reimburse with interest any unspent funding, including the funds granted for VAT and tax purposes. All verification sources are in Annex 3.SubGrants.

*FENASEC - Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400011*

*Start date: 19/05/2018*

*Initial End date: 18/05/2018*

*Final End date: 31/12/2020*

*BtG-II Budget: 53.867 euros*

*Additional Budget: 6.133 euros*

*BtG-II Budget Completion: 95.97% - 51.694,71 euros*

*Additional Budget Completion: 90.63% - 5.558,23 euros*

*VAT Budget added to Base Budget: 0 euros*

*No. of modifications or extensions: 2*

No additional activities implemented under the Sub-grant due to reprogramming or budgetary remnants.

FENASEC successfully completed all required activities per Sub-grant Action plan and requirements in due time. However, the lack of total fund implementation derives from FENASEC failing to process in due time the required extension and the official VAT remnants availability for activity use. By the time FENASEC processed the official request, the administrative deadlines had already passed, rendering legally impossible to accept both the extension request and the VAT fund reallocation.

*FENCE - Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400010*

*Start date: 14/06/2018*

*Initial End date: 13/06/2020*

*Final End date: 31/07/2021*

*BtG-II Budget: 53.866 euros*





*Additional Budget: 6.134 euros*

*BtG-II Budget Completion: 100% - 53.866 euros*

*Additional Budget Completion: 100% - 6.134 euros*

*VAT Budget added to Base Budget: 862,42 euros*

*No. of modifications or extensions: 3*

With the financial remnants from both base budget and VAT funds authorization, FENCE produced in July 2021 a small book containing traditional tales in braille for the inclusion of children with visual disabilities. These texts accompany the Literacy and Mathematics textbooks, as well as the Guides, providing children with visual disabilities with access to leisure content in the same fashion as their peers. FENCE produced 600 units of the traditional tales book, delivering 300 to MINEDUC on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2021.

Picture 17. Classical tales in braille book cover



FENEDIF - Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400012

*Start date: 05/05/2018*

*Initial End date: 04/05/2020*

*Final End date: 30/05/2021*

*BtG-II Budget: 54.400 euros*

*Additional VAT Budget: 4.600 euros*





*BtG-II Budget Completion: 100% - 54.400 euros*

*Additional VAT Budget Completion: 100% - 4.600 euros*

*VAT Budget added to Base Budget: 1.610,12 euros*

*No. of modifications or extensions: 4*

With the financial remnants from both base budget and VAT funds authorization, FENEDIF produced through April and May 2021 a comprehensive communication magazine detailing the main project activities carried by Bridging the Gap project in Ecuador with all beneficiary organizations. These communication materials complement the communication and visibility actions implemented at country level, facilitating the nationwide visibility impacts of the project. FENEDIF produced 900 units of the magazine. FENEDIF distributed the texts to partner DPOs and CONADIS, as well as OTC AECID Ecuador.

Picture 18. Magazine Cover



FEPAPDEM - Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400005

*Start date: 05/06/2018*

*Initial End date: 04/06/2020*

*Final End date: 30/03/2021*

*BtG-II Budget: 53.866 euros*

*Additional Budget: 6.134 euros*

*BtG-II Budget Completion: 100% - 53.866 euros*





*Additional VAT Budget Completion: 100% - 6.134 euros*

*VAT Budget added to Base Budget: 2.044,14 euros*

*No. of modifications or extensions: 3*

With the financial remnants from both base budget and VAT funds authorization, FEPAPDEM produced in March 2021 the leaflet “*Mi dinero y yo. Principios de Educación Financiera*” (My money and me. Financial Education Basics) as a digital-only educational product in Easy-Reading. This text complements the Así Aprendo collection, catering to students with intellectual disabilities on their transition to adulthood. This text affects both hard and soft skills, as well as grounding the pedagogical contents and dexterities on the national curricula for Mathematics. This helps persons with disabilities by providing inclusive materials for their socioeconomic inclusion. This are the first financial education materials designed in Ecuador in Easy-Reading for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Picture 19. Mi dinero y yo Textbook cover



Due to AECID authorizing DPO Sub-grant beneficiaries to use the remaining VAT funds for base expenditure for financing activities in order to avoid administrative punishments despite achieving the successful implementation of the required activities, the actual collateral funding incurred by AECID exceeded the Grant Agreement committed 130.000 euros.

The additional committed funds through the Sub-grant VAT funds authorization for base cost activity implementation, minus the unspent funds in the FENASEC Sub-grant is 2.344,39 euros, totalling 132.344,39 euros directly committed by AECID for the project eligible costs.





## Chronological Activity Description

Due to the high number of activities pertaining to Outcome 3 in the Country Action Plan and LogFrame, this section lists all the corresponding activities by numerical order in order to facilitate a comprehensive report following. Every activity listed includes a chronological reference, indicating the effective start and end dates for each activity. Each one will also indicate the instrument used for their implementation, whether through Sub-grants to the partner DPOs, In-kind Grant directly managed by the project personnel at OTC AECID Ecuador, or a combination of both. The list includes all programmed activities, describing the changes, amendments and new activities created throughout the implementation phase of the project, regardless of their completion status at the time of elaborating the present report.

### General coordination activities

#### OG.1 General Project management – AECID

This section covers the budget allocated for project management and coordination by AECID personnel and contracted external technical assistances, following the changes in implementation model in 2017 to AECID's initial proposed structure.

AECID staff in the country comprised the designation of a Program Manager as Bridging the Gap Country Manager, tasked with solely overseeing and official approval roles, with no technical and administrative managerial duties for project implementation, as per professional category within AECID personnel system.

In order to expedite project implementation following the instrument definition and signing throughout the first year of project implementation, AECID launched two contractual procedures for technical and administrative assistance for project management and coordination. Namely, a first minor contract procedure on June 2018 for a six-month duration starting October 2018, followed by a second major contract procedure for the entirety of the project, starting April 2019.

The total cost for the project technical and administrative assistance was 165.834,73 euros w/o taxes, including both contracts and the two approved extensions following Bridging the Gap project extension due to the COVID pandemic in 2020.

In terms of budgetary modifications, the chosen procedure for contracting country personnel forced the reprogramming of all funds initially allocated to Heading 1. Human Resources to Heading 5. Other Direct Costs, under Sub-heading 5.9.1. Experts, since Human Resources referred exclusively to personnel contracted as





regular Agency staff, not supported by AECID human resources policy for this project.

*Minor Contract: October 2018 – March 2019*

Due to the impervious need for starting activity implementation, AECID launched a first 6-month contract starting in October 2018 to staff the project until the major contract for the technical and administrative assistance could be resolved in the first quarter of 2019.

Following all required contractual and administrative procedures, AECID awarded the contract to *Fundación CODESPA* on September 2018. The incurred costs for this initial TA contract from the Country Action budget were 14.328,73 euros, w/o taxes.

*Major Contract: April 2019 – October 2021*

Following the required administrative and contractual procedures for major contracts under Spanish law, OTC AECID Ecuador concluded the process for the Technical and Administrative Assistance for Bridging the Gap II project management and coordination on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March of 2019. This contract contemplated the TA for the initial remainder of the project until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March of 2021. Following the required competitive process, AECID and *Fundación CODESPA* signed contract No. 2018/CTR/0901382, starting the 1<sup>st</sup> of April of 2019. The contract was designed to only cover the implementation phase of the project due to an initial faulty understanding of the requirements for personnel under Heading 5 for the capitalization and reporting phase.

Due to the four-month extension to Bridging the Gap project in 2020, AECID and *Fundación CODESPA* signed a first addendum on February 2021 to cover the additional implementation phase timeframe.

On June 2021 AECID and *Fundación CODESPA* signed a second addendum, following extensive consultations with PMU FIIAPP Project Director and the European Commission delegate to the Bridging the Gap project, accounting for the project coordination team need of dedicated personnel for the closing capitalization, justification and reporting phase. As stated in the activity description, the project guidelines considered eligible the personnel costs that are fundamental for the project final phase after implementation. The initial misconception was that AECID Ecuador did not fund its personnel costs via Heading 1, but instead through Heading 5 as Technical Assistances. However, despite the difference in budgetary allocation, AECID did not have dedicated project management personnel at OTC level, thus





requiring the TA for project coordination and management to attend the administrative and technical needs of the capitalization and reporting phase. This second addendum finalizes on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October of 2021 following the official closure of the reporting phase at country level. The incurred costs for the second TA contract from the Country Action budget were 151.505,90 euros, w/o taxes.

Lastly, in terms of budget allocation, this section includes the transportation and per-diem costs for activity implementation and project overseeing and management by AECID staff and contracted technical assistance. It also includes communication and visibility costs not directly attachable to Activity 5.5, such as the production of visibility and communications materials transversal to the project, including general project leaflets, banners, plaques and other visibility materials, in accordance to the project Guide for Visibility and Communications.

All verification sources, contracts and addendums, are in Annex 3.OG1.

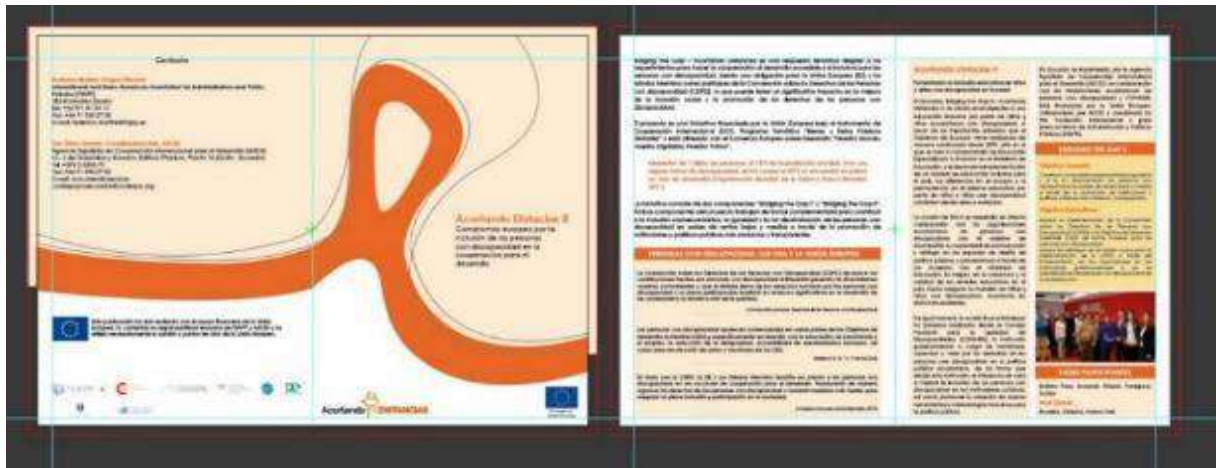
Picture 20. AECID OTC Ecuador GC Mr. Rafael H. García at SC Rome



Picture 21. General project Leaflet







Picture 22. Project banner



### OG.2 International Technical Assistances

The Country Action Plan for Ecuador contemplated the implementation of several International Technical Assistances for the partner DPOs under AECID Technical Cooperation (COO-TEC) instrument. These activities, while specified in both the Action Annex 3. Budget and the Activity Matrix, did not have a dedicated indicator nor an activity code *per se*, despite its importance. The project personnel proposed its





creation through several Steering Committees, but never crystalized due to the already high number of indicators for Outcome 3.

The underlying objective was to provide at least one international technical assistance by Spanish and European experts to each of the four partner DPOs, starting with an academic and networking mission to Spain. Due to the COVID outbreak in early 2020 and the travel restrictions and worldwide confinement measures that ensued, this activity was only implemented in 2018 and 2019, with two international technical assistances achieved during 2019, as well as the DPO and Government institutions' visit to Spain in November 2018.

*DPO and Government Academic and Networking Mission to Spain*

*Start date: November 2018*

*End date: November 2018*

*Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities*

*Beneficiary institutions: DPOs, CONADIS, Ministry of Education*

*Status: Completed*

The good practices exchange to Spain took place in November 2018, and had representatives from OPDs, CONADIS and the Ministry of Education visiting Spain with a weeklong agenda, comprising visits to the Spanish Ministry of Education, FIIAPP, COCEMFE, *Grupo Social ONCE*, *Plena Inclusión Madrid*, National Confederation of Deaf Persons and CERMI among other Spanish DPOs and organizations. The weeklong mission contemplated both networking, training activities and exchanges with good practices in inclusive education, with up to three agendas running in parallel between the cities of Madrid, Seville and Santiago de Compostela.

The activity was undoubtedly highly successful, as it prompted outcomes in terms of synergies, commitments and joint projects between Spanish and Ecuadorian OPDs. The detailed agenda and a specific activity report are in Annex 3.OG2.1, along all required documentation and verification sources.





Picture 23. Ecuadorian DPO and Government representatives visit to PMU FIIAPP



Picture 24. Ecuadorian DPO and Government representatives visit to ONCE



Picture 25. Ecuadorian DPO and Government representatives training at COCEMFE





Inclusive education of children with autism

Start date: June 2019

End date: September 2019

Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

Beneficiary institutions: FEPAPDEM, FENODIS

Status: Completed

Benefiting FEPAPDEM as project beneficiary and FENODIS, as external DPO partner, following the international exchange mission to Spain, Bridging the Gap II Ecuador implemented the first of programmed technical assistances to national DPOs.

This technical assistance comprised two two-day workshops in Quito and Guayaquil on the inclusive education of children with autistic spectrum syndromes in Quito and Guayaquil with the additional support of ALATA.

The expert facilitator for these workshops was Eguzkiñe Etxabe Merodio, a highly experienced Spanish teacher and expert in inclusion of children with Autism from FEVAS – *Plena Inclusión Euskadi*. FENODIS and FEVAS continue to work together and collaborate for implementing joint projects and trainings on inclusive education.

The workshops took place between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 and reached 140 participants, with 60 attendees in Quito and 80 attendees in Guayaquil.

All supporting evidence as well as the required verification sources are available in Annex 3.0G2.2.

Picture 26. Inclusive Education for children with Autism. Workshop in Quito





Picture 27. Inclusive Education for children with Autism. Workshop in Guayaquil



Establishment of Easy-Reading adaptation and validation groups

*Start date:* February 2019

*End date:* November 2019

*Instrument(s):* In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* FEPAPDEM (Fundación EINA, AECADI)

*Status:* Completed

The definition of this international technical assistance begun in November 2018 following the visit by FEPAPDEM and CONADIS personnel, with the accompaniment of the project Technical coordinator to *Plena Inclusión* Madrid during the DPO and Government exchange and networking visit to Spain. Easy-Reading and cognitive accessibility represented the main educational products in Outcome 2, as well as a sound interest for the DPO, which eventually became the first Ecuadorian entity to hold the international Easy-Reading certification.

During the first half of 2019, the project personnel worked alongside FEPAPDEM and *Plena Inclusión* Madrid Director Óscar García for content and timeframe definition, selecting Mr. Carlos Sánchez Vicente from Grupo AMÁS as facilitator. Mr. Sánchez is an expert in Easy-Reading training for both adaptation and validation, and has extensive experience in the production of Easy-Reading documents for inclusive education in Spain.



This technical assistance consisted on two different weeklong trainings with the objective of training education professionals from various FEPAPDEM grassroots organizations, most notably *Fundación EINA*, and the creation of a validation group with persons with intellectual disabilities from AECADI. The latter is the first legally recognized civil society organization in Latin America comprised entirely by self-advocate persons with intellectual disabilities, and its training as validators allows a) creation of established competencies for completing Easy-Reading production cycle and b) provide employment opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities as expert validators of Easy-Reading materials.

Both workshops took place in Quito during October 2019, with a combined duration of 30 hours of training and 10 hours of practical exercises in adaptation and validation.

The adaptation workshop trained 15 professionals at national level, and the validation workshop reached 16 persons with intellectual disabilities and four expert support facilitators.

All supporting evidence as well as the required verification sources are available in Annex 3.0G2.3.

Picture 28. Participants, Easy-Reading workshop for professional adapters



Picture 29. Workshop for Easy-Reading validation with AECADI members



### OG.3 DPO Project management – National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

This section included two different budgetary subheadings dedicated to a) DPO Sub-grant project management, and b) the strengthening of DPO capabilities by donation of technical and accessibility equipment and educative materials.

The Sub-grant allocated funds correspond to 88.921 euros under direct management of the partner DPOs, dedicated to project personnel, materials and other implementation and managerial costs required for project implementation at DPO level, distributed among the four awarded Sub-grants.

Regarding equipment and materials for enhancing DPO capabilities, AECID directly implemented a budget of 20.000 euros for the acquisition of equipment. All DPOs received an equal share for the acquisition of the requested equipment and materials.

The first instalment of materials occurred in November 2018, ending in July 2021, with a 97.35% completion rate.

### FENASEC

FENASEC received two instalments of equipment following the DPO requests. The first instalment contemplated the acquisition and donation of IT equipment (computers, laptops and printers) for updating the DPO technical capabilities in 2019.



The second instalment contemplated video production materials, including a professional video camera and tripod, to strengthen DPO capabilities for the improved production of accessible video content for persons with hearing disabilities in 2021.

### FENCE

FENCE received three instalments of equipment following the DPO requests. The first instalment contemplated the acquisition and donation of typhlotechnological materials for the inclusion of children with visual disabilities, consisting in braille notebooks and awls in November 2018, acquired during the DPO Mission to Spain from ONCE Typhlotechnology Department.

The second instalment contemplated IT equipment (laptops, projector and printers) for updating the DPO technical capabilities in 2019. The third and last instalment consisted on the acquisition of a 3D printer, allowing the DPO to produce educational materials and objects for the educative inclusion of children with visual disabilities in May 2021. This acquisition also contemplated specialized training for using 3D printing technology.

Picture 30. Equipment delivery to organizations of persons with visual disabilities



### FENEDIF

FENEDIF received two instalments of equipment following the DPO requests. The first instalment contemplated the acquisition and donation of IT equipment (computers, laptops and printers) for updating the DPO technical capabilities in 2019. The second instalment contemplated the acquisition of a professional drone with







incorporated High Resolution video camera. FENEDIF, the largest of the partner DPOs, has permanent representation in all the Ecuadorian provinces with the exception of Galápagos through the PETROAMAZONAS E.P- sponsored SIL programme, and engages in a wide array of activities for the rights of persons with disabilities. FENEDIF also has a dedicated media department, and the drone will help to improve its media production, as well as their ongoing geo-localization efforts in mapping nationwide accessible and specialized educative units and organizations of persons with disabilities.

### FEPAPDEM

FEPAPDEM received two instalments of equipment and educative materials following the DPO requests. The first instalment contemplated the acquisition and donation of IT equipment (laptops, printers) for updating the DPO technical capabilities in 2019. The second instalment contemplated professional educative and neuropsychological materials and profiles for the pedagogical evaluation of children with intellectual disabilities and their educative inclusion. This process concluded in 2021 and contemplated importing proprietary materials from global leading publishers Pearson's and Editorial TEA, among others. These materials allow FEPAPDEM to increase their technical capabilities in both assessing the pedagogical situation and needs of children with intellectual disabilities, as well as providing state-of-the-art educational materials for the inclusion of children with autism.

Picture 31. Educational and neuropsychological materials



All supporting evidence, including detailed lists of equipment, as well as the required verification sources are available in Annex 3.OG3.





## LogFrame Activities

Activity 5.4 Study on the challenges for Inclusive Education in Ecuador

*Start date:* 2018

*End date:* October 2019

*Instrument(s):* In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* DPO partners

*Status:* Completed

Following a lengthy administrative process due to the nature of major contracts under Spanish applicable law, the contract No. 2018/CTR/0901639, awarded to Ms. Ligia Pilar Samaniego as the head of a Temporary Joint Venture, was signed the 24th of April of 2019, officially starting the 7th of May of 2019.

The project established a working group with a permanent member of each OPD and the project coordinator to oversee the independence and quality of the study. The final product, comprising the final version of the Study, as well as all the different annexes, was approved on October 2019, in accordance to the ToR.

This study allows civil society organizations to have an in-depth independent and relevant analysis of the current situation of inclusive education in Ecuador, as well as identifying bottlenecks and proposing potential courses of action, giving national OPDs a powerful tool to foster their capabilities for policy influencing and the application of the CRPD.

This Situational Analysis allows stakeholders to work on establishing assumptions and incorporate external factors in a reliable way. Inclusive education was on the agenda, but probably in a more rhetorical and communicative way than real. The initial analysis has allowed supporting critical positions towards the operation of inclusive education in order to address adequate responses.

While the impact for Ecuadorian DPOs and civil society organizations might be currently low due to their relative weakness as political actors, it can be an extremely useful resource for international actors and development donors as it is a comprehensive external, independent, DPO approved study. As noted in the previous Annual Reports, it can indeed provide a sound stepping-stone for the advancement of inclusive education in Ecuador. It could foster the capabilities of policy influencing with the Government for the impulse of a National Model for Inclusive Education and the application of the CRPD, especially in light of the Committee Recommendations following the Country Review in 2019.

All the required information, the final product, as well as the required verification sources are available in Annex 3.Act5.4.





### Activity 5.5 Awareness raising campaign

Start date: December 2018

End date: August 2021

Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

Beneficiary institutions: DPO partners, Ministry of Education

Status: Completed

After the beginning of the Technical and Administrative short-term contract with *Fundación CODESPA* for the coordination and implementation of the project in Ecuador in October 2018, with the accompaniment of the former Communication & Planning Officer at OTC AECID Ecuador, Mr. Mario Fanjul, AECID launched the first ToR for the creation of the Campaign strategy and several initial communication products.

This activity contemplated the following products:

- Strategy document for the Awareness raising campaign for the entirety of the project duration, including graphic line design, in accordance with the existing project Guidelines for communications and visibility
- 2.000 tryptic with general project information, as well as awareness raising information regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities, including braille version.
- Radio cue, with accessible video in Ecuadorian Sign Language for national promotion of the project campaign, aired in Spotify
- Logistic support and catering for the Bridging the Gap II Ecuador launch event, held on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March of 2019, including the elaboration of graphic material and visibility banners.

The consultant team, led by Mrs. María Augusta Olmedo, designed the campaign strategy after close collaboration with the National Federations, in order to devise an inclusive campaign incorporating the needs and requirements of persons with different kinds of disabilities. The campaign design included several focus groups with each partner institution, and expanded the original requested products with the production and design of virtual stickers for WhatsApp.

The designed campaign, named *#YoMeQuieroSumar*, contemplated the production of several media materials as well as BLT activations to demonstrate through live experience the everyday realities of persons with disabilities in a non-inclusive societal model. The campaign designed an overarching theme for its participatory





development, through the creation of a national video contest for children with and without disabilities attending regular, inclusive schooling. The campaign contemplated linking with CineMark group in Ecuador to show the results at national level, and AECID personnel linked with the Office for Cultural Affairs at the Spanish Embassy in order to increase the scope of the activity, drafting what would be a cycle on cinema and disability, with several video pieces pre-selected.

Since the campaign appeared as a required product for the MoU between the National Federations and the Ministry of Education, its late signing in November 2019 delayed its implementation. At the start of 2020, the second phase (implementation) of the awareness campaign was ready to launch once the MoU obstacle was surpassed, but the COVID pandemic hit, rendering all previous campaign design outdated due to the confinement and later, with the complete online schooling system. While it can be argued that children could still produce media pieces from their homes, this defeated the intended purpose of the campaign, aimed at creating awareness through the joint, playful productions of children with and without disabilities together at their schools.

The delay caused by both, the MoU requisite and the pandemic in project implementation, forced the project team to prioritize the completion of the purely educational activities in order to achieve the outputs and outcomes proposed in the Country Action Plan and its LogFrame.

In 2021, in order to fulfil the commitments of the National Federations with the Ministry of Education regarding communications, the project financed the edition of a final project video covering the whole project process and achievements, including key interviews with all project stakeholders.

In addition, Bridging the Gap II Ecuador financed the reproduction of the Bridging the Gap photobook by Christian Tasso, as well as the Spanish version of studies “The Empowerment of Women with Disabilities. A Compilation of Implemented Activities and Identified Best Practices” and “The unsteady path”, developed by FIIAPP’s PMU, with a production of 500 units of each document.

All the materials pertaining to the awareness campaign and communication were handled to the Ministry of Education on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2021.

All the required information, including the campaign products as well as the required verification sources are available in Annex 2.Act5.5.





Picture 32. Project launch Event on March 2019



Picture 33. #YoMeQuieroSumar logo



Picture 34. #YoMeQuieroSumar leaflets





Pictures 35 and 36. Audio and video cue on Spotify

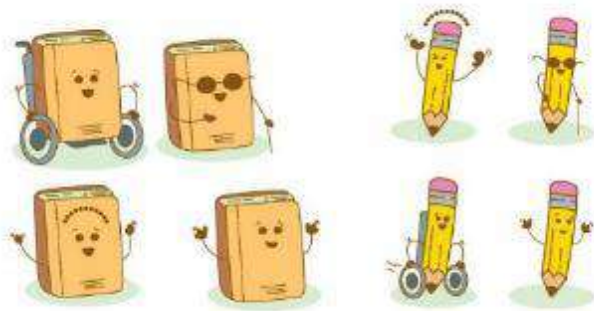




Picture 37. #YoMeQuieroSumar video contest graphic line



Picture 38. WhatsApp stickers

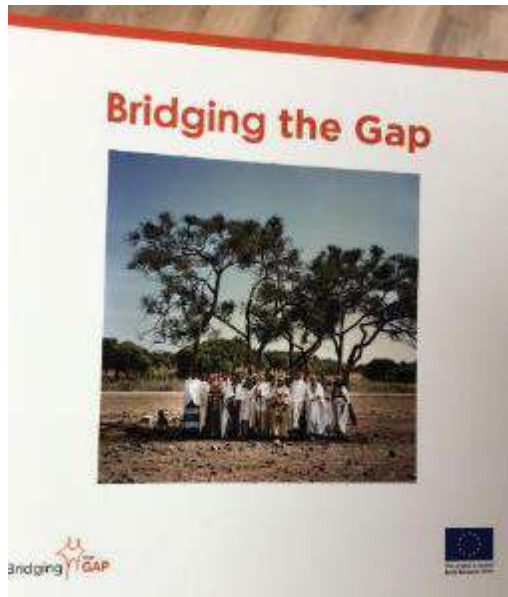


Picture 39. Final project video screenshot



Picture 40. Reproduction of photobook and global studies in Spanish





Activity 5.6 Development of educational and awareness contents to foster inclusive education through educommunicational contents designed for the national system of EDUCATV

*Former: Ac.5.6 Workshops on the Right to Education for school community members*

*Start date: December 2019*

*End date: Not concluded*

*Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities*

*Beneficiary institutions: DPO partners, Ministry of Education*

*Status: Not completed*

Originally, this activity comprised several live workshops in schools for community members, including teachers, administrative personnel, students and their families.

With the implementation of the strategic plan for the awareness campaign, the project aimed to kick-start its initial workshops via this activity by embedding it in a larger training session for each educative district in collaboration. At the end of 2019 and early months of 2020, AECID joined with the Ministry of Education and the former *Plan Toda una Vida* Technical Secretariat to implement these awareness workshops.

Due to the COVID pandemic and its impact on the country, this activity became unrealizable. In agreement with all project stakeholders in the country, the activity







was reworked throughout 2020 and approved by the Steering Committee of November 2020.

The details regarding the implementation of the activity are under the following chapter Impact of the COVID pandemic.

*Activity 5.7 Workshops on the National Inclusive Education Model for institutions and teachers*  
*Start date: December 2019*

*End date: July 2021*

*Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities*

*Beneficiary institutions: DPO partners, Ministry of Education*

*Status: Completed*

The MoU process, explained in Activity 5.10, between the National Federations and the Ministry of Education affected this activity, impeding its implementation until signing, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019.

Following the signing of the MoU, AECID started working with MINEDUC and the National Federations in designing contents and methodologies in accordance to the designed activity, regular workshops across the country with live participants. With the burst of the pandemic, the projected activity fell off. During the Emergency Committee held in April 2020 for project reprogramming, this activity switched to the production of an online course for e-learning platforms.

Due to the pandemic situation, the National Federations were affected and had limited resources to oversee and contribute to the process. The partner DPOs, with the exception of FEPAPDEM, focused their efforts on implementing their mandated activities.

Entering the last year of implementation, with many activities recently unlocked after the MoU signing, and the inception of the pandemic, several activities took place simultaneously in order to achieve the project outputs, which led to not completing this activity again.





Following the Presidential elections in 2021, and with the confirmation that the National Director for Inclusive and Specialized Education and her team would continue under the new administration, the activity resumed. With roughly four months left for project implementation, the former methodology was discarded due to time constraints, no longer being possible producing the intended lengthy e-courses.

Starting May 2021, AECID project personnel worked with MINEDUC to organize a three-day online seminar for all nationwide personnel of DECE and UDAI departments, as well as public system teachers of specialized and inclusive schools. The seminar comprised the following topics:

- Session 1: Human Rights and Social Model of Disability  
Lecturer: Mrs. Diana Suasnavas, MSc
  - o Session 1.1. (2 hours): Human Rights and Persons with Disabilities: CRPD and international instruments; Ecuadorian Constitution, Organic Law on Disabilities; Organic Law on Education
  - o Session 1.2. (2 hours): History and evolution of the concept of disability: from religious definitions to biosocial model of disabilities.
  
- Session 2: Pedagogical strategies for inclusive education  
Lecturer: Mr. Paul Córdova, MSc
  - o Sessions 2.1. & 2.2. (4 hours)
  
- Session 3: Universal Design for Learning and Inclusion Paradigms
  - o Session 3.1. (2 hours): Introduction to IDL  
Lecturer: Mr. Paúl Córdova, MSc
  - o Session 3.2. (2 hours): Inclusion Paradigms: Specialized Education and transition to Pedagogical Resource Centres  
Lecturer: Mrs. Mónica Cortés, PhD

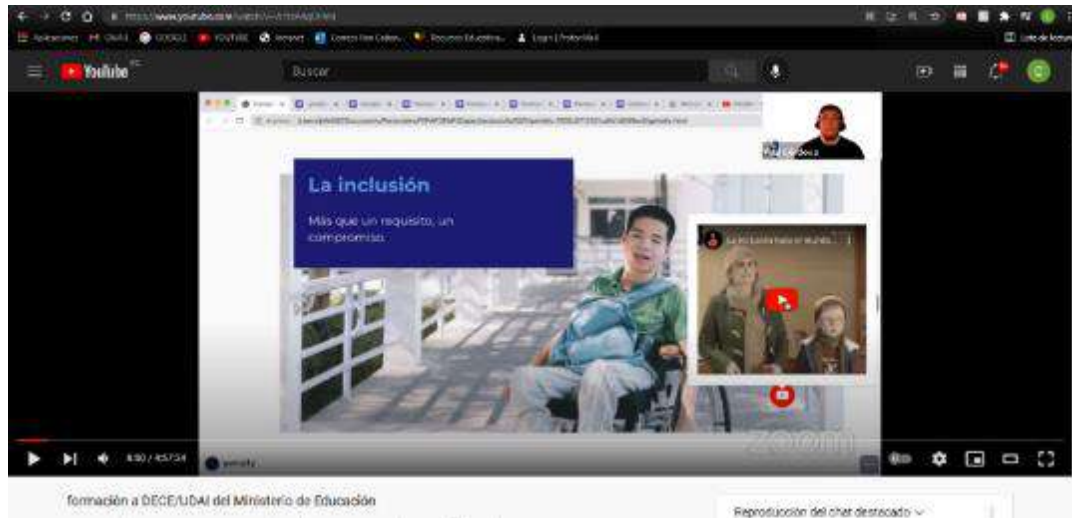
The training had an outstanding success, greatly surpassing any expectations, in terms of both experts' high quality delivery and total attendance. MINEDUC originally informed that the convoked attendants were 500. With an online seminar room capability of 1.000 attendees, the first session filled within the start of the transmission.

In order to accommodate the additional requests from teachers and MINEDUC personnel, the second and third day, the project provided livestream services. This allowed for an average of 1.200 simultaneous attendees to each session via Zoom and YouTube, peaking at over 1.600 participants. PMU FIAPP provided the technological means for the seminar.



Two sessions of the seminar are in to the project [YouTube channel](#)<sup>9</sup>. All the required verification sources are available in Annex 3.Act5.7.

Picture 41. Online workshop screenshot



Picture 42. AECID in Ecuador Twitter outreach



Activity 5.8 Course on Advocacy and Public Policy for DPO

Start date: 2019

End date: Not completed

<sup>9</sup> Session 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ar9zA4qOHmI>  
 Session 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQyZyVjQPo&t=4s>



*Instrument(s):* In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* DPO partners, CONADIS

*Status:* Not completed

This activity contemplated the creation of an online course on advocacy and public policy for DPOs at CONADIS e-learning platform. This posed several obstacles since the beginning of the project, which eventually led to the dissolution of the activity and its non-implementation.

Active political participation in Ecuador by civil society organizations is an ongoing contentious topic, which is particularly notable in terms of organizations of persons with disabilities. Up until the latest Government change in May 2021, the President of CONADIS was Mr. Xavier Torres, a high profile political figure in terms of disability, former Minister of Urban Development and Housing and presidential advisor during the tenure of former President Lenín Moreno. At the same time, Mr. Torres is the founder of FENEDIF, and while not holding any official position at the Federation during his governmental tenure, his influence was present.

Aside of these convoluted relationships between civil society organizations and government entities with mandate regarding disability policy, the policy influencing capabilities of DPOs are very limited. Most importantly, DPOs have an almost absolute budgetary subordination to public funds, stemming fundamentally from the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion and CONADIS itself, as well as economic support from FENEDIF through its PETROAMAZONAS E.P MoU.

Without a real economic self-sufficiency and very weak collaboration between partner DPOs, coupled with an absolute lack of interest by CONADIS to strengthen policy influencing capabilities and knowledge due to a perceived potential threat to its direction, the activity was secondary for the project partners. This situation in Ecuador is thoroughly explored on the PMU report regarding DPO participation in the partner countries, elaborated by consultant Magdalena Orlando. Due to the harsh reality presented in the report, the project direction at FIIAPP, in coordination with the international donors, decided not to publish the study to avoid creating potential new obstacles for implementation.

Despite these obstacles, AECID project personnel tried to adapt the contents of the course, and even initiated probing consultations with Spanish DPO COCEMFE for adapting existing courses to the Ecuadorian reality. AECID also explored the





possibility of toning down the scope of the course to include contents regarding human rights, the CRPD and existing Ecuadorian legislation.

CONADIS already has an online training course covering these issues and pairing this with the lack of interest and support from partner entities, the activity was not performed.

#### Activity 5.9 DPO monitoring missions and activities

*Start date:* October 2018

*End date:* March 2020

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. No. 2018/SPE/0000400012 to FENEDIF, In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* DPO partners

*Status:* Completed

In October 2018, the project sponsored the attendance of the national Federations to the First Inclusive Education Forum held at the Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil, with Dr. Mel Ainscow among other relevant experts in the field of inclusive education.

In November 2018, a delegation of representatives of Ecuadorian OPDs, CONADIS and the Ministry of Education visited Spain to partake in an exchange of experiences and good practices with Spanish OPDs and public institutions, also allowing for networking towards the definition of International Technical Assistances.

In terms of events, Bridging the Gap Ecuador participated, either with country funds or via the support of KM and PMU, in several events held regarding disability and education.

Most notably, this included the attendance of DPOs personnel and Country Technical Assistance to the Disability Summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where aside from the role Bridging the Gap and Project Director Federico Martire had, FEPAPDEM's President Liliana Pelaia de Rudich was an invited speaker in one of the panels.





In July 2019, Bridging the Gap Ecuador was invited by Isabel Maldonado, *Plan Toda una Vida* Secretary, to present the project in the framework of the IDB Governors Meeting held in Guayaquil, to high appraisal.

BtGII-EC personnel and the partner organizations also attended the Good Practices Encounter held by MINEDUC on August 2019. Innovative practices in overcoming barriers from specialized to inclusive education by local teachers, among others, were presented, alongside a remarkably high quality key speakers from the Latin American region, that ranged from critical inclusive education theory to gender issues and sexuality of children and youth with disabilities.

KM also supported the attendance of BtGII-EC personnel to the UNESCO Summit on Equality and Inclusion in Education, celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Salamanca Declaration held in Cali, Colombia, in September 2019.

In February 2020, BtGII-EC supported the attendance of FEPAPDEM Technical Coordinator to the Zero Conference in Vienna, Austria. FEPAPDEM, former recipient of the Zero Award, got the invitation to present the materials despite not fulfilling the requisites for winning since distribution was set to begin in March 2020. This provided a key visibility platform for the already achieved Project outputs and FEPAPDEM in terms of advances in inclusive education at global level.

On February 2020, MINEDUC requested AECID project personnel to contribute to the 2020 Good Practices Encounter of MINECUC and have a dedicated presentation. The project was to support the attendance of Pamela Molina, Inclusive Education Expert at the OEA and her interpreter, as well as the aforementioned panel showing the achieved outputs and outcomes to date and upcoming activities. MINEDUC cancelled the event due to the COVID19 outbreak burst at the beginning of March 2020.

AECID project personnel was regularly invited to disability-related events by Government institutions, including the Ministry of Education, CONADIS, *Plan Toda una Vida* and the Presidency of the Republic, as well as DPOs and other organizations. Some of them include:

- Marrakech Treaty event in 2018 with FENCE being a paramount institution for its implementation in Ecuador,
- First Summit Rights Equality and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, opened by former President Lenín Moreno, with the presentation of a WORLD Policy Analysis Center report on disability laws.





- Public presentation of the Bilingual Binational Education Model for Deaf Persons by MINEDUC and FENASEC
- International Disability Day events at the Presidency of the Republic

All the verification sources and support information, including selected event pictures, are available in Annex 3.Act5.9.

#### Activity 5.10 Dialogues and coordination with the Ministry of Education

*Start date:* October 2018

*End date:* August 2021

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. No. 2018/SPE/0000400012 to FENEDIF, In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* DPO partners, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

This activity became a key component for the implementation of the project in Ecuador, both in positive outcomes, and negative effect on the designed implementation procedures and schedule.

Intended as a mere coordination and accountability activity, for the main project outputs and outcomes between the partner institutions and AECID towards the Ministry of Education, since the start of the In-kind and Sub-grants implementation phase in fall 2018, the work and coordination with the Ministry of Education was constant, both bilaterally and multilaterally. The indicator is set to achieve the target 100%, however the amount of meetings and coordination spaces held vastly outnumbers the proposed output indicator.

With the start of the initial technical assistance contract for project coordination on October 2018, AECID requested the first multilateral meeting with the Ministry of Education in order to present the final project LogFrame, calendar implementation, as well as to start the implementation team with all stakeholders.

The first meeting happened on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October of 2018 at the Ministry of Education with the participation of former Subsecretary of Especialized and Inclusive Education, Mrs. Fernanda Yepez, and the team from the National Direction for Inclusive and Specialized Education. This meeting turned into the appearance of the biggest obstacle for timely implementation of the project.

Despite previous agreements and support from the Ministry of Education, Sub-secretary Yepez explicitly demanded the creation and signing of a specific





Memorandum of Understanding between the beneficiary DPOs and MINEDUC. This required MoU would comprise the totality of the activities that related to production of accessible educational materials, training to teachers and other education units' personnel, the physical accessibility works in the selected specialized schools and the communication campaign. This comprised the vast majority of the designed project activities. This request implied the effective suspension of any activity that involved access to students, teachers and schools belonging to the national public education system until the MoU signing.

It is important to note that the Ministry of Education was not a direct beneficiary of the project *per se*, having CONADIS as beneficiary for Outcome 2. Aside from this particular hurdle, the public sector situation in Ecuador, with a remarkably high rotation in high and middle directive roles, which are usually accompanied with the rotation of the specific departments' technical personnel, made even more lengthy and difficult the process of coordination with the Ministry of Education. From October 2018, MINEDUC had four different Ministers of Education, six Sub-secretaries for Inclusive and Specialized Education, and five National Directors for Inclusive and Specialized Education (DNEEI). This extreme rotation deeply impacted the process for the MoU and the included activities, since every change in personnel required re-starting the vast majority of the process and the project presentation.

The mandatory requirement of the Memorandum of Understanding came as an unexpected surprise. In order to implement the project, AECID obtained an Official Support Letter from Education Minister Mr. Peñafiel Larrea on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of 2017. As noted in the General information and Sub-grant section of this chapter, AECID used the first year of the project (April 2017-March 2018) to develop and officialise the required implementation instruments under Spanish applicable law, and in accordance to AECID mechanisms, approved by the successful EU Pillar Assessment.

AECID project personnel in Ecuador, namely former Country Manager Eva Otero and the technical and administrative assistance for project coordination and implementation at *Fundación CODESPA*, in order to smooth the MoU elaboration process and facilitate DPO contributions, lead the process of elaboration of the Memorandum document.

After extensive review and contributions by all stakeholders, which included detailed activity definition as per content and methodology, the partner DPOs and AECID officially submitted the final Memorandum of Understanding document on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February of 2019 to then Minister Mr. Milton Luna and Sub-secretary Mrs. Fernanda Yopez. This document had already gathered the approval of the Ministry of Education DNEEI, thus the expectations were that, despite the required administrative process







for its official signing, the Memorandum would be signed during 2019 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter, unlocking the implementation of the contemplated activities.

Following new changes at MINEDUC with the removal of Mrs. Yepez from the Sub-secretariat, on May 2019 Mrs. Isabel Maldonado assumed the position of Sub-secretary for Inclusive and Specialized Education, along with a new change at Directorial level, the fourth since October 2018. In June 2019, former President Lenín Moreno accepted the resignation of Minister Milton Luna, naming Mrs. Monserrat Creamer as new Minister of Education<sup>10</sup>.

While these changes in directorial personnel and authorities implied the vast improvement of the working relations with MINEDUC, and their keen interest for supporting the project implementation and the speeding of the MoU process, it also caused new delays in the signing process. This blocked the new implementation schedule, as well as rendering invalid all the devised Terms of Reference until date.

While DPOs continued to work on the design of educational materials, since the Marrakech Treaty allows civil society to elaborate accessibility adaptations to national curricula texts, and AECID personnel implemented the activities that were not MoU dependant, no training and awareness raising activities could be implemented.

Finally, after over a year since the MINEDUC demand, and almost ten months after the official submission of the Memorandum of Understanding final document, the four National Federations of Persons with Disabilities and the Ministry of Education signed the Bridging the Gap II Memorandum on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November of 2019<sup>11</sup>. Alongside the signing organizations, CONADIS, AECID, EUD and the Spanish Ambassador Mr. Carlos Abella y de Arístegui participated in the process as “read and approved” overseeing members.

With the signing effectively unlocking Bridging the Gap II Country Action Plan, coordination rushed to establish a new framework and calendar for implementation, starting December 2019 with the first phase of Activity 5.17.

Due to the Christmas holidays and end-of-year closure of administrative and budgetary procedures at institutional level in both Ecuador and Spain, AECID scheduled the required National Steering Committee for partner validation of the new calendar and strategy of intervention in January 2020. With the pandemic burst in March 2020, all the scheduled intervention halted and major COVID reprogramming meant extensive

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.elcomercio.com/tendencias/sociedad/monserrat-creamer-ministerio-educacion-moreno.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://educarecuador.gob.ec/el-ministerio-de-educacion-firmo-convenio-en-beneficio-de-estudiantes-con-discapacidad/>





changes to the project implementation strategy. The close coordination and work between AECID, the partner DPOs and the Ministry of Education continues at the time of elaboration of the present report, in order to assist the National Federations in satisfactory delivering all the MoU requirements.

After extensively detailing the process and negative impacts of this activity regarding project implementation at large, it is important to address this activity on the positive outcomes it produced.

The outcome of facilitating the first Memorandum of Understanding for the joint strengthening of inclusive education in Ecuador by civil society representative organizations of persons with disabilities and the Ministry of Education, including distribution and collaborative piloting of state-of-the-art accessible educational materials and specialized training, greatly surpasses the initial expected outcomes of Bridging the Gap in Ecuador.

The project facilitated the collaborative work of the four beneficiary National Federations for the advancement in the rights to inclusive education, effectively becoming the first major project ever to bring together the civil society representatives of persons with physical, visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities to collective work for a common goal.

It is also the very first civil society led project for inclusive education in Ecuador alongside the Ministry of Education since the creation in 2009 of the Sub-secretariat for Inclusive and Specialized Education.

In terms of outcomes, sustainability and replicability, this achievement by Bridging the Gap has the potential to become a regional best practice in terms of collaborative work for the implementation of the CRPD and the rights of persons with disabilities, paving the way for future interventions.

It has certainly exceeded the project expectations regarding the strengthening of DPOs capabilities and presence as political actors within the realm of inclusive education for persons with disabilities in Ecuador.

Finally, it is necessary to remark that following the May 2019 changes in authorities and personnel at the Ministry of Education, and despite the following delays, working with the National Directory for Inclusive and Specialized Education has been very easy, both in implementation and communication terms.

The team at DNEEI and the Sub-secretariat comprises a highly talented group of technical, administrative and directive personnel, with sound experience regarding the





inclusion of persons with disabilities, remarkable technical prowess, and complete alignment to Human Rights models and the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

All supporting information, as well as required verification sources, are in [Annex 3.Act5.10](#).

Picture 43. Official signing of Bridging the Gap MoU at MINEDUC



Activity 5.11 Development of new educational material for children with hearing impairment

*Start date:* October 2018

*End date:* July 2021

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400011 to FENASEC; In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* FENASEC, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

The pilot kit for inclusive education for children with hearing disabilities was the key activity designed and implemented by FENASEC in the Country Action Plan. The final cost of the activity exceeded its initial budget in 1.500 euros due to changes on the





items within the kit to honour the MoU, which included unplanned materials, and the availability of extra funding due to efficient spending and budget reprogramming.

This was a very efficient activity, with the corresponding indicator reaching 350% implementation rate.

Deaf scholars across the country developed the totality of the materials<sup>12</sup>, and children with hearing disabilities reviewed them before publication to ensure its quality.

FENASEC directly handled the content design, creation and initial production for all materials with the accompaniment of AECID project personnel through its Sub-grant, resulting in high quality educational materials, and the first ever in Ecuador for the inclusion of children with hearing disabilities.

Both the Country Action Plan and the Sub-grant Action Plan had a loose definition regarding the intended contents for the kits besides the adaptation to Ecuadorian Sign Language of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Social Sciences book from the national curricula.

FENASEC eventually settled on the following materials by the first quarter of 2019, with the pre-production for the book in parallel:

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade Social Sciences book in ESL, in DVD
- Classic tales in ESL in DVD, with matching physical flipping books
- Inclusion guides for parents, teachers and interpreters
- Educational dices for early ESL learning
- Kit briefcase

However, the activity budget, especially due to favourable exchange rates and the cautious indicator target, was sufficient for expanding the quantity of items within the kit, thus increasing its potential positive impact.

FENASEC has one of sign language dictionaries of reference in the region, and thus the idea of designing and producing an educational dictionary for the early school stages, and doing it with children with disabilities for all students came up.

On an inclusive employment fair, FENASEC presented the inclusive alphabet made by partner social consultant MarujaDidak. The early inclusion material contains the alphabet in both ESL and braille and was added to the kit. This is the final list of the materials committed in the MoU with MINEDUC:

- 4<sup>th</sup> grade Social Sciences book in ESL, in DVD

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<sup>12</sup> With the exception of the Alphabet in both ESL and braille, by MarujaDidak





- Classic tales in ESL in DVD, with matching physical flipping books
- Inclusion guides for parents, teachers and interpreters
- Educational dices for early ESL learning
- Educational ESL Dictionary
- Inclusive Alphabet book
- Kit briefcase

During the pandemic, alongside DVDs, flash memories containing the contents of the kits were also included.

FENASEC decided without informing the Ministry of Education to change the originally considered educational dices for inclusive political maps of Ecuador containing each province and capital cities in ESL. Due to the educational dices appear explicitly listed on the MoU, this eventually led to the production of educational foam dices with ESL cards by AECID following the official delivery to MINEDUC. This increased the kit contents without the need to amend the MoU agreement. All the products are available at the project e-library.

FENASEC produced a pilot run of 10 kits through Sub-grant funds by the end of 2020. COVID pandemic affected the production of the kits, with the final contents being ready for production in March 2020.

With the remaining budget, AECID produced an additional 25 kits, and delivered the committed 20 kits to MINEDUC on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April of 2021.

Due to the MoU specific requirements and the lengthy process for an amendment, AECID officially completed delivering the kits with the handling of 20 DVDs and 20 educational foam dices and matching ESL cards on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2021.

All the verification sources, including products, is in Annex 3.Act 5.11.

Picture 44. Kits for inclusive education





Picture 45. Recording process of ESL textbook



Picture 46. Intercultural workshop for the ESL Dictionary review





## Activity 5.12 Development of new educational material for children with visual impairment

*Start date:* October 2018

*End date:* July 2021

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400010 to FENCE

*Beneficiary institutions:* FENCE, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

The initial planned date for completing this activity was in fall 2019, since the existing DECSIV team at FENCE, in charge of all education activities, designed all the books content, and led by the initial Sub-grant project coordinator at FENCE, Mr. Joaquín Rodríguez.

The FENCE Braille Print House (*Imprenta* Braille FENCE – IBF) is the only entity with the knowhow and the technology, albeit creative, to produce braille materials in Ecuador, and production was set to begin in April 2021, following Ecuador sectional elections of March 2019.

Due to the recurrent internal turmoil that erupted on April 2019 in the Federation, which forced the suspension of the use of Sub-grant funds, the intended date was subsequently postponed, and the coordinator released from its post by FENCE Directory (FENCE internal turmoil has a dedicated section in the following Difficulties encountered chapter). This deeply affected the implementation of all activities related to persons with visual disabilities, as well as hampering the regular implementation of activities that required the active participation of all beneficiary DPOs.

Following the change in Sub-grant coordinator in May 2019, Mrs. Amparo Gómez assumed the position. Ms. Gómez, a practicing public school teacher, with vast experience working with persons with visual disabilities both at FENCE and in the public education system, suggested that the book content required an external review in order to validate it, since she could observe inconsistencies.

This external review took place in October 2019 under the Sub-grant financing, and produced a second version of the mathematics and braille literacy texts, set to enter production on March 2020.

The pandemic burst, with the imposing of strong confinement measures, with persons with disabilities considered among particularly vulnerable groups, and thus with higher





restrictions. This affected the production capabilities of the IBF for several months, and once confinement measures relaxed and production was to resume, a new self-convoked Extraordinary Assembly at FENCE happened trying to depose the President, Mrs. Diana Banchón, leading to a new suspension on the Sub-grant funds.

FENCE Directory and President, Mrs. Banchón, also removed Mrs. Amparo Gómez from her position as coordinator, both due to this inner conflict, as well as the situation during the first attempt at Activity 5.13 under her tenure as coordinator. During these events, the 14<sup>th</sup> of May Mrs. RIADIS Directive personnel, with close ties to grassroots organizations of FENCE and former IBF President, contacted the project coordination at AECID regarding the poorer quality of this second version of the texts that were to enter production.

With Sub-grant use halted, after internal considerations, the 10<sup>th</sup> of September of 2020 the project personnel contacted the ONCE Foundation for Latin America (FOAL), historical partner of AECID alongside *Grupo Social* ONCE, in order to get a comparative review of both versions of the texts and suggestions for ways forward. After official consultations, the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion continued to recognize FENCE Directory, therefore lifting the suspension on the Sun-grant use.

The process for contracting a new coordinator ended in December 2020, with Mr. Carlos Palacios becoming the new FENCE coordinator for the project activities, and effectively resuming the pending tasks.

After the voluntary review done by FOAL-affiliated expert Mrs. Jacinta Sánchez, the conclusion was that the first version was of superior quality, and while both were lacking fundamental preparatory elements for teachers and parents, they were better for the accompanied learning of braille literacy and mathematics in inclusive education at regular schools. Due to this, Activity 5.14 was changed to support the production of two guides for the early inclusion of children with visual disabilities, including pedagogical information, methodologies and braille literacy tips.

With the Presidential elections of 2021, the IBF could not begin printing the texts due to the committed production of accessible electoral ballots for both electoral rounds until May 2021, with production concluding by July 2021.

FENCE delivered the MoU-committed 50% of the braille texts to the Ministry of Education on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 2021.

All the verification sources and support information are available in Annex 3.Act5.12.





Picture 47. Heidelberg print machines adapted for braille printing



Picture 48. Braille books



Activity 5.13 Training for teachers with visual impairment

Start date: 2020

End date: XXXXX 2021

Instrument(s): Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400010 to FENCE; In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities



*Beneficiary institutions:* FENCE, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

This activity also suffered the consequences of the internal turmoil of FENCE, specifically during its second event in summer 2020, leading to the termination of Mrs. Amparo Gómez as FENCE coordinator for Bridging the Gap activities. During the months following the initial burst of the pandemic, FENCE worked with the project personnel and MINEDUC in the design of the trainings and selection of facilitators, with the trainings scheduled to begin on the last week of July 2020.

Three days prior to the start of the trainings, FENCE President Mrs. Paola Banchón contacted AECID requesting to halt the activity, as it apparently did not go through the institutional channels for internal approval and selection, with FENCE coordinator Mrs. Amparo Gómez bypassing the Federation Directory. This led to the administrative warning of Mrs. Gómez, and her effective resignation the 7<sup>th</sup> of August of 2020. FENCE remained without coordinator until December. AECID restarted contacts with MINEDUC and FENCE on January 2021. The process moved swiftly despite a revision on the content of the trainings due to having the logistical aspects solved from the previous attempt, as well as the trainees identified.

The training comprised 12 sessions, with a duration of five hours per session for a total of 60 hours, and lasted from the 27<sup>th</sup> of February to the 30<sup>th</sup> of April of 2021. The Ministry of Education officially validates the course within its inner system of points for the professional promotion of teachers. All the participants were active teachers with visual disabilities within the public education system, except for six working at FENCE-sponsored institutions, and a total of 66 participants successfully completed the course. The topics covered ranged from the National Curricula, classroom planning, evaluation, cooperative work to rights of persons with disabilities or sexuality and disability. Out of the six different facilitators, four were persons with disabilities.

All the verification sources and support information are available in Annex 3.Act5.13.

Picture 49. Zoom screenshot of an online training session





Activity 5.14 Manual on pedagogical tools and methodologies for the early stages inclusion of children with visual disabilities

Former: Ac.5.14 People with visual impairment organizations training activities on Education Management

Start date: September 2020

End date: July 2021

Instrument(s): In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

Beneficiary institutions: FENCE, Ministry of Education

Status: Completed

Due to the events affecting the implementation of Activity 5.12, the project personnel, in accordance to FENCE and with the support of FOAL changed this activity to the design and production of methodological guides for the inclusion of children with visual disabilities, geared towards teachers and parents. The decision to undergo this change responded to a) the need to support the braille texts with an accompanying methodological guide for parents and teachers in order to maximize the knowledge and capabilities for the effective inclusion of children with visual disabilities, and b) the difficulties in organizing trainings for FENCE grassroots organizations due to the pandemic and its effects.

Initially, the idea was to contract Mrs. Jacinta Sánchez to design both guides following the revision of the braille texts. Ms. Sánchez suggested instead Ms. Miriam Benavides, an Ecuadorian teacher who had extensive experience in working with children with



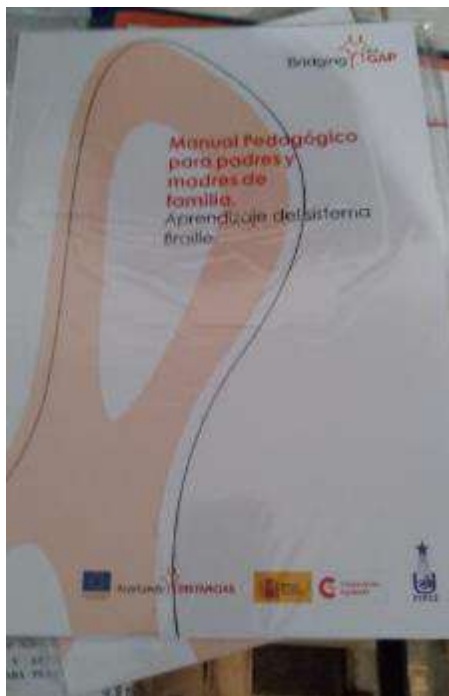
visual disabilities alongside Ms. Sánchez during her experience through international cooperation in Ecuador.

AECID used the technical cooperation procedure for the implementation of the activity and Ms. Benavides delivered the final version for the guides on July of 2021 to undergo editing and design according to the visibility manual of the project.

The ToR for the physical production of the guides launched in parallel, starting on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, contemplating 800 units of each of the two Guides. The selected provider delivered the guides on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July of 2021. Project personnel delivered the MoU-mandated 50% to the Ministry of Education on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August of 2021.

All the verification sources, support information and products are available in Annex 3.Act5.14.

Picture 50. Guides



Picture 51. Delivery of Guides, educational and communication materials to MINEDUC





Activity 5.15.1 Development of new educational material for children with intellectual disabilities

*Start date:* August 2018

*End date:* February 2020

*Extended activity – Start date:* September 2020

*Extended activity – End date:* June 2021

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400005 to FEPAPDEM; In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* FEPAPDEM, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

This is potentially one of the most impactful activities in terms of innovation in inclusive education educational materials achieved by the project and it did not present any major obstacle during its implementation.

FEPAPDEM did all content design and creation of the *Así Aprendo* collection and the accompanying Teachers Guides through its Sub-grant. The materials of the collection are groundbreaking in terms of novelty, accessibility and quality. Ample references to this output appear extensively throughout this final report. As a follow-up, activity 5.16 had a dedicated section explaining and working with the texts and the guides as initially designed.





The collection comprises the first five levels of Basic Education in Ecuador for Language and Mathematics. Each text contains an accompanying Teachers' Guide. AECID produced 5.400 units of the three textbooks in a first edition, and delivered them to FEPAPDEM by fall 2019.

The textbooks are grade III adaptations for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities and follow all criteria in terms of requirements and dexterities present in the national curricula. They are cognitively accessible and link to a wide array of external open-source, free and public resources.

The name *Así Aprendo* (This is how I learn) stresses the idea that persons with intellectual disabilities are not unable to learn and that the regular education system is unequipped to teach the students in ways they can learn.

The *Así Aprendo* collection and FEPAPDEM was shortlisted to the Zero Awards Prize, despite not fulfilling all the required eligibility criteria, as the collection was not distributed within the public education system.

FEPAPDEM delivered the MoU-required 50%, 2.700 units on February 2020 following the MoU signing, with the plan to start to implement them in schools with the start of the Coastal Academic Year in April 2020. However, the pandemic outbreak in March halted the plans.

The collection contains the very first texts for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities, not only in Ecuador, but also at regional level, and one of the very first worldwide in terms of grade III adaptations of the national curricula, meeting cognitive accessibility criteria, in Spanish.

Due to the COVID reprogramming, with the FEPAPDEM available funds from Activity 5.16, the partner DPO requested the production of book 4 in the collection, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics book. The content design and creation process started on September 2020, and comprised four products, the last being the final version of the textbook.

The consultant delivered the first products in timely fashion, but requested a contract extension due to one of the members of the team being positive and symptomatic with COVID19.

The final product arrived on May 2021, and in June printing begun. The printing process comprised 1.020 units of first edition of *Así Aprendo* 4 book, as well as a second edition of books 2 and 3 of the collection. AECID delivered the books to FEPAPDEM on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July of 2021. With Ecuador starting the progressive return to





classrooms at the time of this report, MINEDUC almost completed the nationwide distribution of the books.

All the verification sources and supporting information, including the products, are in Annex 3.Act5.15.

Picture 52. *Así Aprendo* Book Collection



Picture 53. Books in use (video screenshot)



Picture 54. Boxed Second edition of *Así Aprendo* collection





#### Activity 5.16.1 Training activities for teachers on education for children with intellectual disabilities

*Start date:* 2019

*End date:* 2020

*Instrument(s):* In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* FEPAPDEM, Ministry of Education

*Status:* Completed

In parallel to the MoU signing on the 26th of November of 2019, AECID, FEPAPDEM and MINEDUC previously designed the content and intended methodologies and scope for the training workshops for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities.

The original ToR contemplated both, the course content design, as well as nine workshops at national level, catering for the intended 400 participants, in accordance to the LogFrame.

On December 2019, AECID and the selected consultant signed the contract for this activity, comprising three products:

- Work Plan and content and design for the workshop





- Nine 7-hour workshops for teachers at national level
- Nine workshop reports

This activity was a follow-up to the production of accessible materials from Activity 5.15, resulting in the creation of the *Así Aprendo* collection. FEPAPDEM emphasized the need to complement the production of educational materials with the expert training for teachers on their content and use methodology, being the first materials of its kind ever produced for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities.

Logistics and trainee selection, alongside the content design, was underway when the pandemic hit in March 2020. This forced the project to reframe the methodology to transform the workshop to online means, as well as rescheduling the proposed workshops, and reframe its intended total target audience, as well as duration.

By the end of April, FEPAPDEM and MINEDUC agreed to a reduction of the number of workshops but increasing the workshop duration from seven to ten hours, as well the target audience reach. AECID signed the Contract Addendum in May 2020, allowing for the changes in required products to fit the new pandemic situation. The workshops considered teachers from both public and private schooling systems, in order to reach as many inclusive education institutions and professionals as possible.

The final workshop calendar comprised three instalments of the workshop, for a duration of ten hours each, and divided in four sessions of 2.5 hours, in accordance to the following table:

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Session 1	May 19 / 9:00-11:30	May 19 / 14:00-16:30	May 19 / 17:00-19:30
Session 2	May 21 / 9:00-11:30	May 21 / 14:00-16:30	May 21 / 17:00-19:30
Session 3	May 26 / 9:00-11:30	May 26 / 14:00-16:30	May 26 / 17:00-19:30
Session 4	May 28 / 9:00-11:30	May 28 / 14:00-16:30	May 28 / 17:00-19:30

The workshops contained the following overarching themes for each session:

- Session 1: Social Model of Disabilities and Technical Supports
- Session 2: Communication and Legislative framework



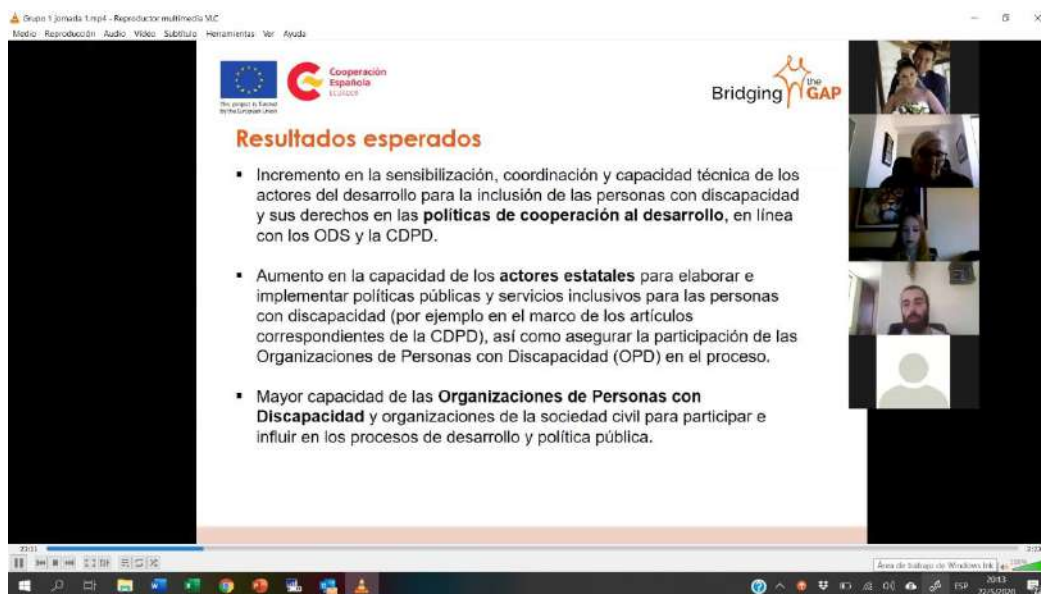


- Session 3: *Así Aprendo* collection
- Session 4: Universal Design for Learning

This activity, both in terms of content and participants, was an utmost success. While the exact numbers of participants for each session and each group appear detailed within the workshop reports and verification sources, the average attendance for the whole activity reached 1.059 participants, almost tripling the target indicator figure. The activity received praise by attendees and authorities at MINEDUC due to its outstanding reach and quality.

All required information, including products and verification sources are in Annex 3.Act5.16.

Picture 55. Online Training Screenshot



Activity 5.16.2 Video edition of the online training workshop for teachers on education for children with intellectual disabilities

*Start date:* May 2021

*End date:* July 2021

*Instrument(s):* In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities





*Beneficiary institutions: FEPAPDEM, Ministry of Education*

*Status: Completed*

Due to the availability of funds and the successful experience with the online training on Activity 5.16.1, FEPAPDEM and the Ministry of Education requested the transformation of the existing online resources into a series of edited videos comprising all the sessions of the course. Due to the reduced quality of Zoom recordings, AECID, in accordance with the expert facilitator, included the recording of the adapted sessions as part of the ToR and required activities for the contractual process.

In May 2021 the procedure started, contemplating two products: the complete video rundown for all sessions and the final edited videos, which arrived within the respective deadlines. The 30<sup>th</sup> of July the consultant handled the final videos, having been reviewed and approved by FEPAPDEM.

At the time of elaboration of this report, the final videos were not yet uploaded to the project e-library.

All information and verification sources, including an online repository for the final videos is in Annex 3.Act16.2.

Picture 56. Edited video course screenshot





## Activity 5.17 Infrastructure adaptation in 8 schools affected by the 2016 earthquake for children with physical disabilities

*Start date:* November 2019

*End date:* December 2020

*Instrument(s):* Sub-grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400012 to FENEDIF; In-Kind Grant No. 2018/SPE/0000400020 to the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities

*Beneficiary institutions:* FENEDIF, Ministry of Education, CONADIS

*Status:* Completed

Since September 2018 following the Sub-grant official start, FENEDIF conducted a lengthy and detailed identification process for the selection of the schools for accessibility construction works through its personnel on the provinces of Esmeraldas and Manabí, with the accompaniment of FENEDIF Architect Freddy Salazar.

CONADIS, under the presidency of Mr. Xavier Torres, accompanied the whole process of identification providing additional technical expertise with the deployment of accessibility technician Mrs. Kathia Quintero, CONADIS Officer in Manabí.

The activity personnel delivered several technical on-site and architectural reviews, including field visits by AECID project personnel that eventually led to the change in one of the initially considered schools due to its almost ruinous state in Muisne, Esmeraldas, for the school Santa Ana, Manabí.

The selected school in Quinindé – Las Golondrinas presented an administrative issue. While this parish historically belonged to the Province of Esmeraldas, following a popular consultation in 2017, the National Assembly approved its annexation to Imbabura. This led to a Sub-grant narrative modification with the explicit inclusion of Imbabura as a permitted geographical intervention zone.

During the required administrative process for Sub-grant modification, FENEDIF and AECID personnel approved the selected institutions, the submitted the request for Ministry approval. MINEDUC approved the proposed list, which remained unchanged throughout the implementation:

- Educative Unit “Yamil Doumet Sepak”, Calceta, Manabí
- Educative Unit “Angélica Flores Zambrano”, Manta, Manabí
- Educative Unit “16 de Noviembre”, San Vicente, Manabí
- Educative Unit “Niño Jesús de Praga”, Santa Ana, Manabí
- Educative Unit “Manos de Amor”, Rioverde, Esmeraldas





- Educative Unit “Guiomar Vera”, Esmeraldas, Esmeraldas
- Educative Unit “Río Quinindé” Quinindé/Rosa Zárate, Esmeraldas
- Educative Unit “Gran Horizonte” Quinindé/Las Golondrinas, Imbabura

By May 2019, the activity was ready to begin, pending MoU signing. This effectively delayed the effective start activity until the 21<sup>st</sup> of January of 2020, with initial contractual procedures beginning in December 2019. Following intense coordination work after the MoU signing, through Sub-grant funds FENEDIF initiated the activity with the five schools located at Manabí and Imbabura provinces.

The construction works in the five schools successfully concluded right before the enactment of the State of Emergency on March 17 2020 due to the pandemic.

This activity was divided for implementation between FENEDIF Sub-grant and AECID direct implementation through the In-Kind Grant. Due legal dispositions and administrative procedures, following the late signing of the MoU, AECID was looking to start its contractual process for the accessibility works in the remaining schools by March 2020.

Following the development of the pandemic, with the progressive relaxation of the governmental measures and the end of confinement, coordination resumed for concluding the remaining three schools.

AECID project personnel and FENEDIF architect Freddy Salazar conducted new on-site visits to re-assess the state of the schools and the required works following several months of confinement. By the end of December 2020, the construction works on the remaining three schools concluded.

During May 2021, AECID project personnel and FENEDIF members conducted on-site review visits and placed the required visibility elements in all schools, pending due to the pandemic effects. The initial planning, together with FENEDIF, CONADIS and the Ministry of Education, involved an inauguration event in one of the intervened schools. While this was attempted with the support of former CONADIS President Mr. Xavier Torres until April 2021, due to the pandemic restrictions and the upcoming May 2021 change of Government could not be implemented.

All information and verification sources, including contracts, photographic evidence and identification reports, are in Annex 3.5.17.



Picture 57. Accessibility works at Niño Jesús de Praga School in Santa Ana, Manabí



Picture 58. Guiomar Vera School in Esmeraldas



Picture 59. Plaque placing at Manos de Amor Educative Unit, Rioverde, Esmeraldas



## Output and Outcome Indicators

The figures regarding the achievement of Output and Outcome indicators appear on the attached LogFrame template in the Project results corresponding chapter, as well as the required synthetic description. This section gives a brief overview of the achieved results in terms of indicator achievement, as well as a larger background on the level of achievement accomplished.

## Output Indicators

Regarding Output indicators, all but three surpassed the proposed target values, with two being of new creation after the LogFrame and financial reprogramming following the COVID pandemic. The remaining fifteen indicators all reach the 100% target, with ten indicators greatly surpassing that mark.

In terms of outputs, the achievement and success of Bridging the Gap in Ecuador is unquestionable, largely exceeding the outreach in terms of training and educative material production. With the progressive return to classrooms, the access to new



accessible materials and resources, along with the variety of trainings, will certainly help in fostering a comeback to a more inclusive education system for children with and without disabilities. However, the key aspect is that, in terms of quality, both materials and trainings also were very high.

The previously available braille materials were outdated in terms of curricula, produced in 2012, and there were no guides for teachers and parents to understand how to effectively accompany children with disabilities along their learning process in an inclusive education environment.

The work with FENASEC allowed for the production of the first-ever materials for the inclusion of children with hearing disabilities in Ecuador. The final kit comes with a large quantity of items and content, including materials that have the potential to set a milestone in inclusive education like the Early Ecuadorian Sign Language Dictionary for Education, and others that pave the path for how to adapt regular textbooks of the national curricula on a relatively easy, cost-effective way. Deaf scholars across the country developed the totality of the materials<sup>13</sup>, and children with hearing disabilities reviewed them before publication to ensure its quality. While few units as a pilot test, most materials are equally accessible on their digital version.

The *Así Aprendo* collection has already gathered international recognition and praise, being shortlisted to the Zero Awards Prize, despite not fulfilling all the required eligibility criteria at the time due to the pandemic burst timely halting the distribution and use of the texts throughout the public education system.

The collection contains the very first texts for the inclusion of children with intellectual disabilities not only in Ecuador but also at regional level, and one of the very first worldwide in terms of grade III adaptations of the national curricula, meeting cognitive accessibility criteria, in Spanish. With a cost of roughly 50.000 €, children with intellectual disabilities, teachers, parents and the Ecuadorian education system at large, now have state-of-the-art accessible texts for Language and Maths for the first six levels of Basic Education.

In terms of physical accessibility, the pandemic hit in the most unfortunate time, with the construction works in three out of the eight schools already completed. The improved eight schools are new and ready for the progressive return of students to their classrooms, directly benefitting an estimated population of over 400 children with disabilities in the provinces of Manabí, Esmeraldas and Imbabura.

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<sup>13</sup> With the exception of the Alphabet in both ESL and braille, by MarujaDidak







## Outcome Indicators

The outcomes of the project, despite the impact of the pandemic, achieve all proposed LogFrame indicators, but also exceed the initial expectations in potentially far more significant manners. The signing of the first MoU between the partner DPOs and MINEDUC for inclusive education is a success in terms of its completion and public recognition, and a milestone in terms of collaboration between organized civil society and government for inclusive education for persons with disabilities, despite the hiccups it caused for timely implementation.

The MoU process is detailed in Outcome 1 and Activity 5.XX, and its ripple effects on the chapters regarding Sustainability and replicability and Synergies and complementarities.

*Nº of new projects/initiatives on inclusive education launched or participated by national OPDs.*

The project surpassed the initial indicator for Outcome 3, both in actual achieved figures and in potential new opportunities. The partner organizations are now in better position to continue collaborating with international cooperation agents, government institutions and third sector actors for the achievement of the right to inclusive education. In terms of indicator achievement, several projects crystalized after the works through Bridging the Gap project, which allowed the National Federations by preparing and positioning them to apply to international funding calls.

### *FENEDIF – Public Inclusive Education in Ecuador 2020-2022: Inclusive playgrounds*

FENEDIF, alongside Spanish DPO COCEMFE (National Confederation of Persons with Physical and Organic Disabilities), whom are historical partners, and have been participating in funding calls for over a decade, particularly through the Spanish Cooperation system, participated in AECID Project Funding Call of 2019 with this project.

Starting in 2020 but delayed due to the pandemic, the project aims to improve inclusive education in eight schools in the coastal province of Manabí through the establishment





of the innovative methodology of inclusive playgrounds<sup>14</sup>. AECID is the project main donor, with a total budget of 367.285 euros.

### *FENEDIF – Financial Education for Persons with Disabilities*

FENEDIF contracted *Fundación CODESPA* as consultancy and technical assistance for their Inclusive Tourism project in Ecuador, implemented alongside COCEMFE and with AECID funding. This project started in 2018, and is currently on its evaluation phase. Due to this collaboration, both institutions started working in the implementation of *Fundación CODESPA* and *Fundación CrisFe* course on Financial Education with persons with disabilities at their grassroots organizations.

Currently, over 250 persons with disabilities completed the trainings. On October 2020 both institutions signed a new MoU for the continuation of the training through online methodologies, expecting to reach 400 more participants throughout 2021 via FENEDIF's employment inclusion service (SIL).

### *FENCE – Economic inclusion of persons with visual disabilities*

Following a visit by FOAL Director Estefanía Mirpuri to Ecuador in spring 2019, *Fundación CODESPA*, alongside FENCE and FOAL agreed to design and apply to USAID funding for the implementation of a disability line of work in Ecuador. Following several reviews by both USAID Ecuador and USAID HQ, the project was approved with a total of \$ 700.000 in funding by the United States Government. Implemented by a Sub-grant awarded to *Fundación CODESPA*, the project started on February 2020, and is now entering its main implementation phase.

The project aims to strengthen the technical and policy influencing capabilities of FENCE for inclusive labour of persons with visual disabilities, with a special focus on the inclusion of blind and low-vision women. Some of the key activities are the development of accessible financial education courses catering persons with visual disabilities, as well as the creation and accompaniment of small businesses and blind entrepreneurs at national level. Another main aspect is the restart of FOAL famed AGORA program, implemented in Latin America since over 15 years, and halted in Ecuador in 2017. This program aims to provide professional and life skills training to persons with visual disabilities at national level, in order to increase their technical

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cocemfe.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/cocemfe-educacion-inclusiva-ecuador-2020-2022.pdf>





competencies and be better equipped for accessing regular employment opportunities. This project has a projected end date in December 2023.

### *FENEDIF – Empowerment of women with disabilities in Ecuador*

In 2020, FENEDIF and COCEMFE applied to the Call for Projects by the European Union Delegation in Ecuador with a project regarding the empowerment of women with disabilities at national level through specific training, awareness raising and policy influencing. The project considered the creation of a National Group of Women with Disabilities that could bring together all women departments at the different National Federations.

Due to the lack of funding in the Call, the project is currently on the EUD reserve list, pending new fund availability, since it received 95/100 points at the final evaluation stage.

The project design was led by Bridging the Gap technical assistance for project coordination.

### *FENODIS – Inclusive employment for recyclers with disabilities in Pichincha*

FENODIS, the National Federation of Disability-related NGOs and *Fundación CODESPA* submitted a project to the same previous EUD Call for Projects regarding inclusive employability for persons with disabilities in three marginalized areas of Quito and Pichincha province. Aiming at tackling the lack of access to employment through entrepreneurship, and working closely with recycling associations, due to lack of funding available the project was rejected, despite achieving 43.5/50 points.

The existing project design can be adjusted to compete in future funding calls.

### *FEPAPDEM – “Cuida tu salud” Easy-Reading collection*

Through the international technical assistance of Carlos Sánchez, from Grupo AMAS/PlenaInclusión Madrid, FEPAPDEM and its grassroots organizations received expert training leading to the creation of a group of Easy-Reading adapters, as well as the first group of Easy-Reading validators through AECADI.



During the COVID pandemic, in 2020 Fundación EINA, one of the flagship entities under the umbrella of FEPAPDEM, together with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) released the “Cuida tu salud” collection. This collection includes two texts in Easy-Reading format for the prevention of covid-related issues, including a specific text on mental and emotional health<sup>15</sup>. Trainings for persons with intellectual disabilities, families and professionals accompanied the production of the guides.

Picture 60. Online workshop on COVID prevention



### *FEPAPDEM – Easy Reading materials for Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion*

In march 2020, shortly before the pandemic eruption, the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion granted funding to FEPAPDEM for developing two texts in Easy-Reading formats, regarding Violence prevention and Social and romantic relations. Due to the pandemic and the change in Government in 2021, the project continues on hold, expecting receive funds from the upcoming 2022 State budget.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/1449678225354548/posts/2938187183170304/>  
<https://www.jica.go.jp/ecuador/office/others/ku57pq00002rwdd-att/Informe Anual JICA Ecuador 2020.pdf>



### *FEPAPDEM – Easy Reading materials for Quito Museums*

FEPAPDEM and the Municipality of Quito agreed in 2020 to produce pilot Easy-Reading materials for the Carmen Alto Museum, as well as a cognitive accessibility consultancy for achieving inclusive museums, with the aim to expand this activity to all museums belonging to the Municipality. The project halted due to the pandemic.

At the time of elaborating the report, due to the political situation at the Municipality of Quito, with legal actions underway for the removal of the current Mayor, this project remains suspended.

### *FEPAPDEM – Inclusive employment for persons with intellectual disabilities*

In 2021, *Fundación CODESPA* and FEPAPDEM submitted two project proposals for projects regarding the economic inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities. FEPAPDEM is the Best Buddies partner in Ecuador. Best Buddies, a worldwide program for employability of persons with intellectual disabilities funded and led by the Kennedy Foundation, is the top ranked program worldwide regarding economic inclusion and employment.

The projects are currently participating in the 2021 Calls by AECID and the decentralized Government of Valencia, Spain, with the final resolution expected during winter 2021. These projects aim to tackle employability and entrepreneurship of persons with intellectual disabilities, albeit with different methodological and geographical focus. The project submitted to AECID seeks for 300.000 euros in funding, while the project submitted to the Government of Valencia seeks 400.000 euros, which amounts to 80% of the total project budget.

All supporting documents and verification sources are in Annex 3.Outcomes.

## General conclusions on Outcome 3

The previous sections provide a detailed account of the activities and achieved outputs and outcomes, therefore the general conclusions will address the situation of the National Federations at large in relation to the project and the joint work, relations, and ways forward, without entering in the implementation process itself.





FENASEC delivered high quality materials, and is a sound partner going forward. Despite the implementation issues with their Sub-grant, which are attributable to specific personal issues of FENASEC Executive Director at the time of matters. While enduring a bleak financial situation as most of the Federations, deaf persons' organizations are highly mobilized, and have notable experience in terms of education for children with hearing disabilities.

FENCE is undergoing a conflictive internal process that has deeply affected the Federation sound capabilities in championing the rights of persons with visual disabilities in Ecuador. New directorial elections are due to happen in 2020. In the meantime, FENCE continues to work with other international donors and Grupo Social ONCE in several areas of intervention.

FENEDIF remains the biggest organization in terms of both affiliation and technical capabilities. With nationwide presence through its SIL project and the support of PETROAMAZONAS E.P, FENEDIF remains a primary partner among disability organizations. FENEDIF is currently implementing two projects with AECID funds in Ecuador with the collaboration of COCEMFE, one of them having inclusive education as its main objective.

FEPAPDEM, being the smallest organization, has been by far, the best performing DPO. The quality of the *Así Aprendo* collection gathered international recognition, and the capabilities installed in Easy-Reading, as well as international networking are enormous. FEPAPDEM with its member organizations are the most sound civil society organization in terms of intellectual disability in Ecuador, and is definitely advised to continue working with it in terms of international cooperation.

Finally, after detailing all issues and activities regarding Outcome 3, AECID Ecuador believes the project has been a sound success, against all the unexpected odds along the way.

While the pandemic has unequivocally been a major obstacle, being the focus on inclusive education, the achievements in both outputs and outcomes lay the foundations for a promising development of inclusive education in Ecuador.

The project has spearheaded massive trainings, state-of-the-art educational materials, networking and perhaps most importantly, the actual proof that the collaboration between civil society organizations of persons with disabilities and government institutions yields outstanding results in limited amount of time, and with limited financial resources.





## Impact of the COVID pandemic

The COVID pandemic posed deep implications for the project in Ecuador, in virtually every level possible, from financial implementation, activity completion to outcome indicators achievement.

Ecuador, as is widely known, was one of the hardest hit country in the region at the beginning of the pandemic, imposing one of the most strict confinement measures on March 17, 2020.

These measures lasted well over 6 months, with a slow progressive reduction that continues up until the current reporting phase of Bridging the Gap project. Currently however, Ecuador has become one of the highest vaccinated countries in the region following the formation of the new government after May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

While the pandemic situation affected virtually every aspect of life, taking into account the scope of the project aiming at strengthening inclusive education, the impact of the pandemic was extreme in relation to the targeted population.

To briefly illustrate the situation, prior to describing in detail the specific effects the pandemic had on project design and implementation: at the official deadline for report submission, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, there is still no mandatory return to physical classrooms ordered by the Government of Ecuador.

Despite national plans for return, spiking up through the months of July and August, physical attendance to classrooms remains exclusively a parental decision, linked to the approval of school-specific return plans approved by the Ministry of Education.

Currently, there are no initial education schools, which have fully returned to physical classrooms. Most educative units in the country function on a limited weekly attendance to classrooms with virtual classroom support, or remain completely under virtual methodologies.

Once this is analysed in relation to the difficulties in access to virtual education due to mainly

- a) Urban/rural differences in the lack of access to proper connectivity, and
- b) Economic costs of internet and access to technology,





The situation of education in Ecuador may have taken a high toll on the regular development of Ecuadorian children and youth. This has been even more challenging for children with disabilities and their families, pertaining mostly to the lowest percentiles in terms of household income, as well as due to the lack of accessible materials and tools for online education.

While the Ministry of Education developed tools, and television and radio spaces for educational content, the impact of the pandemic in the general educational access and results will certainly begin to appear in the upcoming months, once a sound statistical and comparative analysis can reflect the impact in terms of capabilities, results and drop-out records for the general schooled population.

Regarding the situation of persons with disabilities at large, since the inception of the pandemic and the resulting social control measures, persons with disabilities are considered an especially vulnerable group, which has reduced even more their opportunities for physical interaction. To illustrate this situation, at the time of the present report, the offices of the National Council for Inclusion of Disabilities – CONADIS remains closed to the general population with very limited physical attention, and its personnel continues to work on a hybrid physical/virtual modality of work.

In terms of project budget, the pandemic implied the reallocation of the vast majority of funds allocated to Headline 2 due to the suspension of international travel and the impact on training activities, including awareness raising workshops and the proposed activities for the communication campaign, having to rethink all the initially planned workshops to online means. The pandemic also affected the planned international technical assistances to the beneficiary DPOs, thought to provide specific expert training for strengthening the capabilities of the beneficiary civil society organizations. Prior to the pandemic, the implementation plan considered at least one international technical assistance to each beneficiary DPO, as well as potential transversal trainings, monitoring missions and attendance to local and international events on the rights of persons with disabilities. By the end of 2019, two technical assistances on the inclusion of children with autism and the formation of groups of adapters and validators of Easy-Reading texts to FEPAPDEM had successfully concluded, while two international technical assistances to FENCE and FENASEC were under discussion to be implemented in 2020. These, alongside a proposed technical assistance to FENEDIF in accessibility evaluation, had to be cancelled due to the high complications for international travel, as well as the restrictions for in-person events, particularly with the conditions imposed to persons with disabilities.

While project personnel and the beneficiary institutions worked together since April 2020 to reprogram and rethink potential activities, the transition to online means, the







elimination of all related travel activities, alongside the uncertainty of the COVID development and the limited timeframe available for project implementation accounts almost completely for the unspent funds remaining at the end of the implementation phase.

## Specific COVID relief activities

In terms of specific activities carried out with the beneficiary DPOs for the support of persons with disabilities during the harshest months of the pandemic, it is important to describe the actions carried with and in support of the National Federation of Deaf Persons in Ecuador – FENASEC and the National Federation of Ecuadorians with Physical Disabilities – FENEDIF.

### COVID19. Support to FENASEC's COSORI service for live interpretation for persons with hearing disabilities

COSORI is a communicative mediation system set up by FENASEC since 2018, with the support of the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion of Ecuador. The system, while simple in nature, provides an invaluable tool for persons with hearing disabilities in Ecuador by providing live sign language interpretation for their everyday communicational needs, with a specific focus on supporting non-hearing persons with their legal, administrative and medical issues.

The system allows persons with hearing disabilities to access free live interpreters in Ecuadorian Sign Language via Skype to provide assistance while communicating with non-accessible public services without an interpreter.

Due to the pandemic, with the implementation of severe confinement and the establishment of virtual means for the vast majority of interactions with public entities and services, the barriers in accessible communication for deaf persons increased.

In order to strengthen the capabilities of the CONADIS system, Bridging the Gap provided financial support during the second half of 2020 by paying for the professional services of four additional interpreters. The additional personnel allowed the COSORI system to be available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.

A full detail of the numbers of live interpretation calls rendered through the support of Bridging the Gap appears at Annex 3.COVID1, along with all sources of verification.



Picture 61. COSORI Leaflet



### COVID19. Donation of bio-safety kits for persons with disabilities throughout FENEDIF's national network

FENEDIF requested AECID for the authorization to use financial remnants within the awarded Sub-grant to acquire and distribute bio-safety kits among persons with disabilities throughout its grassroots organizations. The National Federation of Ecuadorians with Physical Disabilities comprises organizations at national level, having the biggest reach of all project beneficiaries, as they run a nation-wide employment inclusion programme with the financial support of PETROAMAZONAS E.P., and in coordination with CONADIS.

The detailed information on the delivery of the kits to the final beneficiaries is accessible by clicking this [here](#)<sup>16</sup>.

The distribution reached 613 bio-safety kits among 23 organizations among five provinces of Ecuador (Manabí, Guayas, Esmeraldas, Los Ríos and El Oro).

<sup>16</sup> <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ROgQBW6mg2TmrnHauNJCioo5eC0uGtaz>



All detailed verification sources for this activity, including lists of beneficiaries and pictures, are accessible in Annex 3.COVID2.

### New activities: LogFrame reprogramming

The reprogramming of the LogFrame also considered the creation of two activities funded through the financial changes undertaken, aiming to address the challenges of education under complete online methodologies. Both these activities, namely Activity 5.6 and 5.7.1, did not conclude by the end of the implementation phase. Many of the general reasons as to why fall within the Difficulties encountered upcoming chapter.

#### Activity 5.6. Development of educational and awareness contents to foster inclusive education through educommunicational contents designed for the national system of EDUCATV

After the initial uncertainty on the first months of the pandemic, by the second half of 2020 talks between AECID, the National Federations and the Ministry of Education crystalized in the creation of the aforementioned activity.

Due to the switch to full online teaching, the Ministry of Education implemented their program EDUCATV, which provided daily educational content for students across the country through radio and television segments. Due to its broadcast through the vast majority of radio and television operators present in Ecuador, an approximate of 96% of the total Ecuadorian population had access to educational slots.

During the second half of 2020 specific talks begun with the National Federations and the Ministry of Education for designing an activity that could take advantage of the EDUCATV program and produce media content for awareness raising and inclusive education, resulting in the creation of the present activity, presented to the Steering Committee in November 2020 for official approval.

The decision reached was to create an animated series consisting on eight to ten chapters, to raise awareness regarding persons with disabilities, the CRPD and applicable national legislation, as well as portraying disability from the barriers that create it. This was received with keen interest by every of the actors involved however, with the exception of FEPAPDEM, there was no further involvement from the DPOs at beneficiary level, and the process was also halted within the Ministry of Education.





Each DPO was in charge of selecting the specific content related to their disability of focus in order to produce content that was not only adequate, but also necessary and important in terms of raising awareness. While the project personnel at AECID made several suggestions, there was no follow up to this request by the DPOs, rendering the production of content a decision to be taken by project management instead of the representatives of persons with disabilities.

The decision on producing an animated series was contingent on employing the Ministry of Education existing graphic line and animation design, employed for the production of EDUCATV regular contents. This would allow for the reduction of costs for the production of the series, reaching the proposed objective as of episodes, since it would significantly lower the requirements for animation, both in terms of finances and production time.

Being an activity that involved several departments at Ministry level, the National Direction for Inclusive and Specialized Education facilitated meetings between the different departments involved and the project personnel, but the communication stopped in October 2020.

Without the official confirmation on the availability of the animations and the approval to use them, along the lack of support from partner DPOs, the activity was postponed to 2021.

Furthermore, the Presidential elections of 2021 started with the first round on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February of 2020, resulting in a lengthy process that ended with the confirmation of the two ballot candidates on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. The second round happened on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April of 2021, and the new cabinet took place the 24<sup>th</sup> of May of 2021.

The new activity, created in response to the pandemic in 2020, fell off the existing MoU between the National Federations and the Ministry of Education signed in November 2019, thus having no formal agreement that mandated its implementation. This proved a big obstacle for implementing the activity as it was originally intended, since it halted the possibility of receiving a timely official answer regarding the continuation of EDUCATV and the use of the existing graphic line and animations.

There was a last attempt to implement the activity on the second quarter of 2021, reducing its scope and episodes by elaborating the ToR for the activity considering the design of characters and animations from scratch.

Due to:





- a) the new projected costs requiring the use of major contract procedures, which have a lengthier administrative time for both the elaboration of Terms of Reference, as well as for the contractual process itself; and
- b) production time required to develop the desired products significantly increasing,

It was not possible to fulfil the activity before the end of the implementation phase of the project.

#### Activity 5.7.1. Webinar on good practices on inclusive education

The project personnel at AECID suggested this activity to the beneficiary institutions, as a mean to foster networking, and displaying regional best practices in inclusive education, as well as presenting significant outputs and outcomes achieved by the project through the collaboration between DPOs, the Ministry of Education and international cooperation agents. Ecuador personnel also involved KMU and PMU respectively in its initial design.

Ultimately, the activity was not performed due to several reasons:

- a) Work overload and time constrains with the simultaneous implementation of several activities
- b) Required administrative procedures for the official extension of the project and the supporting AECID instruments for its implementation
- c) Calendar considerations
- d) Saturation of courses, seminars and online events resulting in a crowded offer
- e) The final iteration of Activity 5.7, switching to a 15-hour online seminar with regional experts on inclusive education, which reached over 1.000 attendees by Zoom, and peaked in over 1.600 simultaneous participants through livestream





## Conclusions and final remarks on the pandemic impact

The impact of the COVID pandemic for the project was undoubtedly very high, with repercussions on all levels of project design and implementation. It deeply impacted the civil society partners in their technical capabilities and outreach, as well as creating new challenges to address and cater for as representatives of the civil society organizations of persons with disabilities nationwide.

The pandemic also shifted the priorities and urgent necessities of partner government institutions, CONADIS as beneficiary and the Ministry of Education as necessary partner. Having to give response to the new situation due to the pandemic, the required process to initiate activities that by design include a wide array of actors was significantly slower.

Lastly, children are receiving classes mainly by online means up to date. The toll it takes on inclusive education and the devastating effect it may have specifically on children with disabilities, coupled with the scarce access to proper technological means and supports, can only begin to be effectively assessed in the upcoming months, with the progressive return to classrooms.

With over a year, a half of collective experience with almost total online trainings, workshops and events, it has its advantages and disadvantages. This is also true for the project implementation in Ecuador.

Paired with other circumstances, the pandemic is responsible for the lack of complete financial expenditure and significant delays in implementing key and reworked activities. At the same time, the decisions undertaken by AECID and the project personnel, along with its local partners, resulted in increasing the volume of outputs, creating additional accessible material and guides, and greatly exceeding the original intended reach for the planned workshops and seminars. These increased reach, being able to train thousands of teachers and educators at national level, and providing accessible, high-quality educative materials physically and online will be very important for the inclusion of children with disabilities in Ecuador on the progressive return to classrooms.



### Information note regarding VAT

As per General and Specific conditions of the Grant Agreement, VAT in Ecuador is a non-eligible cost. This is due to the specific Ecuadorian regulations regarding VAT for expenses paid through international development cooperation funds.

In Ecuador, all incurred VAT in development cooperation projects is recoverable after project implementation, albeit with certain specificities. This is detailed in the last section of this chapter. However, it is necessary to explain how the particular situation of VAT in Ecuador affects EU-backed projects in terms of funding.

First, the EU considers VAT in Ecuador a non-eligible cost due to this refund provision. This, as noted, does not mean that the project does not incur in VAT costs during its implementation phase. Since VAT costs are actually incurred for the implementation of activities, and would be considered non-eligible, AECID granted the project beneficiaries an additional line of funding dedicated exclusively for paying the incurred VAT (supported by Spanish International Cooperation regulation as it is a reimbursable VAT). This line of funding is additional to AECID committed project co-funding as per Grant Agreement, and therefore is not included in the general project budget. AECID provided 119.805 euros in additional VAT funds, distributed as follows:

- In-kind Grant to National DPOs: 65.818 €
- In-kind Grant to CONADIS: 6.180 €
- Sub-grant to FENEDIF: 29.406 €
- Sub-grant to FENCE: 6.134 €
- Sub-grant to FENASEC: 6.133 €
- Sub-grant to FEPAPDEM: 6.134 €

Unspent funds in In-Kind grants do not generate interests. However, unspent funds at Sub-grants do generate the obligation of refund with interests.

FENCE, FENASEC and FEPAPDEM duly completed all required Sub-grant activities, spending the total amount received pertaining to project funds. Due to VAT regulation, after finishing all project funding, the three Sub-grants had unspent VAT funds. Following DPO request, AECID authorized the use of unspent VAT funds after Sub-grant beneficiaries completed 100% of project funds. This is done to avoid penalizing Sub-grantees for unspent funds that are not related to project implementation, since the unspent funds generate interests. Having successfully completed all required activities, the VAT unspent funds could not be allocated for regular costs per instrument design. The modification allowed DPOs to use VAT funds to pay for base costs, thus avoiding economic penalization to entities that had successfully implemented the required project activities.



Second, AECID law requires Sub-grant beneficiaries to refund any VAT related funds, as stated in the following articles (in Spanish) of the Spanish International Cooperation Grant regulation:

*Artículo 56. Gastos subvencionables. 1. Se consideran gastos subvencionables los que de manera indubitada respondan a la naturaleza de la actividad subvencionada y se realicen en el plazo de ejecución establecido en la resolución de concesión, sin que en ningún caso su coste sea superior al valor de mercado. Dada la naturaleza de las actuaciones que son objeto del presente título, serán también financiables las existencias previamente adquiridas y almacenadas por la entidad subvencionada, puestas a disposición de la actividad, siempre que las mismas cumplan con los criterios de calidad exigidos por el órgano competente en el acto de concesión de la subvención o ayuda. cve: BOE-A-2010-10102 BOLETÍN OFICIAL DEL ESTADO Núm. 154 Viernes 25 de junio de 2010 Sec. I. Pág. 55808 2. Resultan de aplicación a estas subvenciones las normas contenidas en el título II sobre anticipo de fondos para impuestos susceptibles de recuperación. 3. La resolución de concesión podrá establecer, previos los estudios económicos que procedan, la fracción del coste total que se considera coste indirecto imputable a la misma, en cuyo caso dicha fracción de coste no requerirá una justificación adicional.*

*Artículo 43. Anticipo de fondos para impuestos susceptibles de recuperación. 1. En el ámbito de las subvenciones reguladas en el presente título los impuestos susceptibles de recuperación serán atendidos por un anticipo con cargo a la subvención concedida en tanto no sean efectivamente recuperados. En el momento de la presentación de la justificación de la subvención concedida, se aportará, en su caso, declaración responsable de no haber recuperado dichos impuestos, acompañada, salvo previsión distinta de la normativa reguladora de la subvención, de certificado de la Administración tributaria de origen acreditando que no se ha producido dicha recuperación o, en caso de manifiesta imposibilidad de obtener dicho certificado, de acreditación de este extremo emitida por el órgano de la Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo en el exterior o por la Embajada de España,. 2. Si la recuperación de dichos impuestos se produjera durante el plazo de ejecución del proyecto o actividad, los importes recuperados serán aplicados a sufragar gastos vinculados a la actividad, dentro de su plazo de ejecución, sin que sea necesaria autorización previa del órgano concedente, salvo que su aplicación implique cambios o modificaciones que afecten a objetivos, resultados, ubicación territorial, socio local o contraparte o población beneficiaria. 3. En caso de que la recuperación se produzca en los cuatro años siguientes a la finalización del plazo de ejecución de la actividad, el beneficiario podrá proponer su aplicación a actividades asociadas o complementarias a la actuación subvencionada. El órgano concedente emitirá resolución de autorización o denegación de la aplicación de los fondos, indicando, en caso de aprobación, el plazo de ejecución y justificación de los mismos. Si la resolución fuera denegatoria se procederá a la devolución del anticipo. 4. La obligación de devolver a la Administración concedente los impuestos recuperados subsistirá durante cuatro años desde la presentación de la justificación, al cabo de los cuales, de no haberse recuperado aún los impuestos, deberá emitirse declaración responsable acreditando dicha circunstancia, acompañada, salvo previsión distinta de la normativa reguladora de la subvención, de nuevo certificado de la Administración tributaria de origen acreditando que no se ha producido dicha recuperación*

Third, the explanation on why the VAT refund following Ecuadorian provisions makes necessary for VAT additional funding, since its existence marks the VAT non-eligibility for the EU funded projects in Ecuador. The process for VAT refunding initiates during the project implementation phase with the notification to the IRS of the implementation of international cooperation funds. The process for the actual refund then continues only after complete project termination.

This is a notoriously lengthy process. On average, the recovery of VAT expenses paid from international development cooperation funds takes over two calendar years. This situation leads to the necessity for AECID to allocate additional funding to cover the existing VAT expenses throughout the project implementation cycle.





## Communication and visibility

AECID and the project personnel in Ecuador, in coordination with Com&Vis Officer at PMU FIIAPP, ensured the complete compliance of the Communications and Visibility Guidelines and Plan in all implemented activities, products, outputs and outcomes achieved by the project in Ecuador.

Aside from the technical review of all educational and communication products in terms of visibility requirements, AECID project personnel produced and delivered all the required visibility materials regarding project and donor identification for all the directly implemented activities. This included the production of communication materials such as leaflets and reproduction of documents, as well as, visibility and identification materials such as stickers, banners and plaques.

Extensive details and supporting pictures regarding communication and visibility materials and activities appear on the chapter dedicated to Outcome 3 in sections OG1. General coordination, OG2. Sub-grants and Activity 5.5 Awareness campaign.

Therefore, this section first lists all communication and visibility products achieved. Secondly, it also includes a section on dedicated communication personnel at AECID OTC Ecuador level.

Communication and visibility products list:

- Leaflet with general description of country activities (2019)
- Project banners (roll-up) for AECID and each partner institution (2019)
- Large scale Bridging the Gap banner for events (2019)
- Awareness campaign #YoMeQuieroSumar leaflets (2019)
- Awareness campaign #YoMeQuieroSumar leaflets in braille (2019)
- Awareness campaign #YoMeQuieroSumar WhatsApp stickers (2019)
- Awareness campaign #YoMeQuieroSumar audio and video cues (2019)
- Bridging the Gap launch event (2019)
- Technical support to Com&Vis video pills (2019)
- Technical support to Christian Tasso's Bridging the Gap Photobook (2019)
- Participation at the AECID booth in the International Development Fair organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility (2019)
- Presentation at the *Foro Hablemos de Inclusión* (Let's talk about Inclusion) in the framework of the Annual Interamerican Development Bank Governors Encounter, Guayaquil, Ecuador (2019)
- Participation at the International Disability Summit, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2019)



- Participation at the UNESCO Forum for Inclusion in Education, Cali, Colombia (2019)
- Technical support to BtG Annual event in Rome (2019)
- Technical support to COSP organization [suspended] (2020)
- Production of Teo & Bujía divulgative animated series for CONADIS (2020)
- Technical support to Global Latin America and Final event (2021)
- ESL and live captioning support for closing Latin America and Final Bridging the Gap event (2021)
- ISL video interpretation for Global animated video pills (2021)
- Production and installation of visibility plaques for schools (2021)
- Physical reproduction and national distribution of Photbook and studies: The unsteady path and Women and Disabilities (2021)
- Final Project publication by DPOs (2021)
- Final Project video with Project achievements and stakeholders interviews (2021)

The departure without replacement of the Communications & Planning Officer at AECID OTC Ecuador in July 2019 reduced the local office capabilities for undertaking such dedicated communication work for its portfolio. This influenced the communication capabilities for the Project in Ecuador in combination with the MoU and the pandemic altering project implementation. The Phase II of the completed communication campaign strategy was designed to fully undertake external visibility actions for the project, as well as managing press relations and social feeds. AECID Ecuador has a new Communications Technical assistance since July 2021.

However, all events regarding Bridging the Gap, as well as trainings and materials have a dedicated space in the AECID Ecuador website replicating Ecuador e-library, as well as repository for project activities. AECID Ecuador replicated and publicized Bridging the Gap achievements through its social media channels since project start.

## **Difficulties encountered and measures undertaken to overcome them (and eventual project changes)**

The exhaustive Activity report under the corresponding Chapter details all the difficulties encountered, the measures taken, budgetary and LogFrame changes, and the outcome for each activity planned in the Country Action Plan at the end of the implementation phase of the project. The specific effects of the pandemic have a





dedicated Chapter in the present report. The Excel table is in Annex II. Difficulties\_Solutions\_EC.

In terms of difficulties and obstacles, several require a brief mention due to its notable impact on project implementation.

The Memorandum of Understanding process was the most impactful. While the project managed to turn it into a remarkable outcome and an example in civil society and governmental joint efforts, this obstacle alone accounts for a complete year of delay for an ample percentage of Outcome 3 activities.

In terms of administrative issues, the initial project design cancellation led to a much more complex project in terms of financial and implementation instrument design. As noted in Year 1 Report by former Country Manager Eva Otero, this caused a 9-month delay due to strategy reformulation. The chosen instruments, In-Kind Grants, while allowing for direct control over the funds, have different administrative and legal requirements for speedy fund availability and contracting than regular Cooperation Grants or contracts that make implementation processes lengthier on average.

## Cross-cutting topics

Due to the nature and scope of the intervention in Ecuador, fundamentally targeting children with disabilities in their early education stages through the production of educational materials and the training of teachers and other relevant personnel within the national education system, cross-cutting topics carry little weight since project design. However, it is important to note several actions carried within the projected activities address some of these cross-cutting issues, including gender, ethnic origin and self-identification, and especially, visibility and representation of persons with disabilities.

The approach of the Situational Analysis produced assumes both gender and cultural diversity approaches, and qualitatively addresses the differentiated gaps in access to education for boys and girls according to their sex, ethnic origin and urban/rural origin.

Training workshops for teachers and other personnel from the Ministry of Education, due to the methodological change to online means allowed for decentralization and fostering equal access for people living outside the major cities, reaching participants





from every Ecuadorian geographical region (Andean, Amazonas, Coastal and Insular) and including every Ecuadorian province.

In this regard, it is important to mention that Activity 5.16 *Training activities for teachers on education for children with intellectual disabilities* included a specific section on how to address gender and sexual education and identification while working with children with intellectual disabilities. While controversial among some of the attendees, garnered high interest and praise by the Ministry of Education.

For the design of the Educational Dictionary in Ecuadorian Sign Language, one of the materials designed as part of the pilot kit with accessible materials for children with hearing disabilities, FENASEC held a revision workshop aimed at the inclusion of regional idioms and the representation of the different ethnicities present in Ecuador.

This workshop, held on November 2019, brought together deaf scholars from the three main geographical regions of Ecuador (Sierra, Coast and Amazonia) in order to reflect idioms and language particularities among the highly ethnically diverse Ecuadorian society. The graphic design of the dictionary ensures gender and ethnical representation.

Inclusive representation is present in all materials produced by the project in Ecuador.

## **Sustainability and replicability of the project activities**

The project ensured sustainability through two main strategic project decisions relating to AECID knowhow and values, beginning at inception phase.

By designing the project together with the National Federations of Persons with Disabilities and CONADIS, alongside the Ministry of Education, and partner Spanish DPOs, it directly addressed the needs of the beneficiary population, adhering to the “Nothing for us without us” principle. At the same time, the activity and output design aimed at providing completely new accessible educational material to be available nationwide in physical and digital formats, as well as leading the proposed training workshops and awareness campaigns.

The combination of these two factors not only ensured the quality and specificity required, but developed great established capabilities for the DPOs since they had direct control and responsibility over the content design and creation of the educational





materials. The project proved society and the DPOs themselves that have a highly developed and extensive skillset for developing top quality accessible educational materials with relatively low financial costs.

The DPOs delivered all products present in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, yet the document contemplates the joint piloting and evaluation of the learning materials produced, as well as the lasting impacts of the various trainings delivered. Due to the pandemic, the progressive return to classroom is still starting in Ecuador at the time of this report. However, this also means that in the upcoming months more detailed information and data regarding the impact of the project outputs will begin to pile up in an analytically meaningful quantity.

This provides an outstanding opportunity for the DPOs to continue to work alongside the Ministry of Education in tweaking, improving and replicating the educational materials, as well as taking an active role in designing and facilitating public education trainings.

In terms of networking and international relations, the project facilitated extensive contact with Spanish DPOs and the participation in regional events.

Regarding international networking, the Ecuadorian partner DPOs have expanded their relevance and ties. While already members of the most important international networks and alliances, the Bridging the Gap experience has projected them internationally due to their successful work. In this regard, the links with Spanish DPOs and relevant disability figures, scholars and entities provides new avenues for international collaboration.

As shown in the project Outcomes, several international development projects are currently underway in Ecuador focusing on rights of persons with disabilities between Ecuadorian and Spanish DPOs and NGOs.

Another potential key factor for the advancement of inclusive education in Ecuador in the upcoming years is the actual Minister of Education, Mrs. María Brown. Minister Brown is the former Education Officer at the UNESCO Regional Delegation in Ecuador, and her academic background is precisely in inclusive and specialized education for persons with disabilities. Minister Brown, while at UNESCO, participated in Bridging the Gap Quito Learning Space in May 2019.

With the continuation of the technical team at DNEEI, as well as National Director Ms. Karina Rivadeneira, the openness to DPOs and its alignment with inclusive education and rights of persons with disabilities is certain.





CONADIS received the server and technological equipment to now implement their software for inclusion, and have the necessary training and equipment to continue to develop accessible materials and communication at governmental level. With the new technological capabilities, CONADIS is better equipped to evaluate and propose legislative modifications based on data and relevant indicators for the effective achievement of the rights of persons with disabilities in Ecuador.

Regarding replicability of project outputs, all educational materials are free to download on their digital versions, and several online trainings are available at the project and institutional websites. In terms of potential replication and growth of the various collections of inclusive materials, this depends entirely on the availability of funding.

As noted before, the project proved that the technical capabilities and knowledge exists, and that accessible adaptations are cost effective. AECID project personnel in the country estimates that with roughly two to three million euros, the entire national curricula could be either adapted, or redesigned with UDL approaches. The Ministry of Education regularly provides trainings to its teachers and personnel.

At the same time, the experience of developing these materials opens avenues for technical assistances and international consultancies and cooperation for the DPOs, since the materials produced, specially the Así Aprendo collection, can be easily made available with minor tweaks and training to the whole Latin America region.

## Synergies and complementarities

Networking and synergy building has been a priority since the beginning of the actual implementation of the project. The project pit big efforts in networking with international bodies and agencies, fostering relation with Spanish OPDs and NGOs, being especially relevant the November 2018 visit of a delegation of representatives of Ecuadorian OPDs, CONADIS and the Ministry of Education.

The activity was impactful and has already provided outcomes in terms of synergies, commitments and joint projects between Spanish and Ecuadorian OPDs. Further details in the specific report in Activity 3.0G2.1. The project also supported the presence and attendance of Ecuadorian OPDs to both talks with the Ministry of Education and events and forums related to the topic of inclusive education for children with disabilities.





In 2019 the Ministry of Education received approval for a 20M USD loan by the BID to foster inclusive and specialized education in the country, and they are currently on the implementation design phase. BID initially reached BtG-II in order to synergize with the project towards advancing the Inclusive Education Model of Education in Ecuador, but after several efforts by country personnel and Project Director Federico Martire, there was no follow up. The state of implementation is uncertain.

On a networking level, the project established contacts with UNESCO, UNICEF, the Inter-American Bank for Development – BID, COCEMFE, FOAL, *Fundación Autismo*, *Plena Inclusión España* and its regional chapters, and local NGOs such as *Fe y Alegría* and *Fundación CrisFe*.

Despite not having Objective 1 in Ecuador CAP, networking is a major activity of BtG-II EC personnel, carried out from the Technical Assistance, AECID Country Manager and AECID General Coordinator in the country. Bridging the Gap is a highly regarded and supported project by both the Spanish and European Authorities in Ecuador, as well as by the Ecuadorian Government itself.

In November 2020, the GEM Report at UNESCO contacted the project in Ecuador following an online encounter between GEM Report Director Mr. Manos Antonionis and BtG Project Director Federico Martire, due to their interest in the materials produced.

In 2021, EuroSociAL+ Project contacted Bridging the Gap Ecuador in order to evaluate a potential project with the Ministry of Education regarding the actualization of the National Model for Inclusive Education.

## Details on transfers

The project in Ecuador considered the acquisition of equipment for all the beneficiary entities, but it did not consider the purchase of any kind of equipment for its use by project personnel during the implementation phase.

This means that all equipment purchased through the project transferred immediately to the requesting beneficiary, with no transfer done from AECID as implementing partner to the beneficiaries, since as stated above, there was no equipment purchased for the use of project personnel, whether it was AECID staff or the contracted technical assistance.





Therefore, the description of all acquired equipment for DPOs and CONADIS sits under their respective activities in the core narrative section of the report.







## Annexes

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- 30. Annex 3.Outcomes
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- 33. Annex II.Difficulties\_Solutions\_EC

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