

TC Document

I. Basic Information for TC

▪ Country/Region:	ECUADOR
▪ TC Name:	Applying innovation to secure higher education and employment for young people with disabilities
▪ TC Number:	EC-T1534
▪ Team Leader/Members:	Guaipatin, Carlos (IFD/CTI) Team Leader; Tobar Arias, Elsa Katherine (CAN/CEC) Alternate Team Leader; Galeano Buitrago Maria Alejandra (IFD/CTI); Maria Elena Castellanos (IFD/CTI); Jimenez Mosquera, Javier I. (LEG/SGO); Oliveri, Maria Laura (SCL/LMK); Silva Trevino Maria Paulina (IFD/CTI); Michel Torino, Belen (SCL/EDU); Iniguez Zambrano Maria Carola (SCL/GDI) Team Leader; Tobar Arias, Elsa Katherine (CAN/CEC) Alternate Team Leader; Galeano Buitrago Maria Alejandra (IFD/CTI); Maria Elena Castellanos (IFD/CTI); Jimenez Mosquera, Javier I. (LEG/SGO); Oliveri, Maria Laura (SCL/LMK); Silva Trevino Maria Paulina (IFD/CTI); Michel Torino, Belen (SCL/EDU); Iniguez Zambrano Maria Carola (SCL/GDI)
▪ Taxonomy:	Client Support
▪ Operation Supported by the TC:	.
▪ Date of TC Abstract authorization:	04 Oct 2023.
▪ Beneficiary:	Young people with disabilities in the educational centers of provinces Pichincha, Guayas, Manabí, and Santo Domingo in Ecuador.
▪ Executing Agency and contact name:	Asociación Fé Y Alegría Ecuador
▪ Donors providing funding:	Japan Special Fund Poverty Reduction Program(JPO)
▪ IDB Funding Requested:	US\$800,000.00
▪ Local counterpart funding, if any:	US\$200,000.00 (In-Kind)
▪ Disbursement period (which includes Execution period):	36 months
▪ Required start date:	July 1st, 2024
▪ Types of consultants:	Individuals and Firms
▪ Prepared by Unit:	IFD/CTI-Competitiveness, Technology and Innovation Division
▪ Unit of Disbursement Responsibility:	CAN/CEC-Country Office Ecuador
▪ TC included in Country Strategy (y/n):	Yes
▪ TC included in CPD (y/n):	No
▪ Alignment to the Second Update to the Institutional Strategy 2020-2023:	Diversity; Institutional capacity and rule of law; Persons with Disabilities; Productivity and innovation; Social inclusion and equality

II. Objectives and Justification of the TC

2.1 **Objective.** This project seeks to promote higher education access and labor market insertion of young People With Disabilities (PWD) in the technical and technological sectors with the support of Fe y Alegria Ecuador (FyA)^{1,2} providing them with a higher quality of life, personal growth, and independence. This project will be bolstered by

¹ The UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report indicates that accessible technology and assistive devices can improve education, graduate rates, self-esteem and independence of PWD ([GEM Report, 2023](#)).

² International evidence at the high school level suggests that participation in technical education is associated with better graduation and employment outcomes ([Carruthers et al., 2022](#)).

alliances with public technical higher education institutions as well as partnerships with local businesses in the technological sector.

- 2.2 According to the National Agenda for Equality in Disabilities 2021-2025, an average of 47,797 school-age (7-18 years old) students with disabilities were enrolled in between 2019 and 2022; out of which only 2,334 students (4.8%) graduated from high school.³ Regarding college-aged (19-24 years old) PWD, the most recent data is from 2019, where approximately 3.8% of them pursued some degree of higher education; a considerably low figure compared to the 32% of people *without* disabilities in the same age range enrolled in higher education institutions in the same year, as stated by the Opportunity Creation Plan 2021-2025.⁴
- 2.3 However, despite the efforts implemented by the government to support specialized teacher training, the lack of a common curriculum has resulted in uneven knowledge, different learning objectives across individual teachers, and lack of alignment with national education plans. Comprehensive specialized education requires tailored knowledge to attend to the specific needs of each disability. In the case of students with hearing impairment, access to higher education is challenged by the limited number of Ecuadorian Sign Language Interpreters (ILSEC by its initials in Spanish) hired by higher education institutions. Moreover, insufficient understanding of how technology can be used for education of PWD restricts the possibility of using it in their favor. Teachers are not only poorly qualified in the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), but the use of technology has declined significantly with the return to in-person schools following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.4 Aside from the needs of qualified teaching professionals, there is also a gap in the accessibility to higher education for students with disabilities. Adequate options of higher education for PWD in Ecuador are limited; only very few study programs and career opportunities have been adapted to the needs of PWD. At the same time, institutions are not equipped with the tools, assistive technology or even spaces to include PWD in their student body and grant them school permanence and continuity. This disparity is aggravated in rural contexts. Technical programs are not designed with a special consideration of PWD, reducing the chances of their STEM specialization and training in those fields for future employment. At the same time, PWD's need for academic accompaniment⁵ reduces their career options, obliging them to pick the few higher education tracks that have adapted to their learning needs (interpretation, accompaniment, specialized technology, among others). The current context of academic and professional preparation of teachers, as well as the lack of follow-up, accompaniment, assistive support and scholarship grants result in school desertion before student reach a tertiary education (ANID 2021-2025).
- 2.5 Since 2011, FyA has collaborated with the Ministry of Education to promote the educational inclusion of PWD in Ecuador. This collaboration has been maintained through different government administrations and has led to the identification of new challenges such as the need for a higher education institution, an initiative which has

³ The National Agenda for Equality in Disabilities 2021-2025 is the latest public policy instrument developed in Ecuador for the disabled population. However, its data regarding higher education of PWD has not been updated and replicated the information offered in the 2017-2021 agenda.

⁴ "Indicators of higher education, science, technology and innovation. Opportunity Creation Plan 2021-2025", Ministry of Higher Education of Ecuador, 2022.

⁵ Accompaniment refers to the personal assistance (pedagogical, physical, or both) that a PWD needs in order to achieve their academic objectives.

been supported through the Non Objection letter for this Technical Cooperation (TC).⁶ At the same time, FyA has taken initial steps alongside the *Secretaría de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación* to better understand how to manage higher education institutions, how financial and scholarship programs are currently operating in the country, and to establish a collaborative relationship since both government bodies know FyA's potential to meet this educational urgency.

- 2.6 There is a direct link between the low percentage of PWD with tertiary degrees and their low levels of employment. Insufficient opportunities for higher education limits access to formal jobs as many employers require a tertiary degree as a prerequisite.⁷ Currently, there is no defined career guidance strategy for PWD or career services to facilitate their professional trajectories and integration into the job market, thus affecting their integral development and social inclusion as a whole. Higher education institutions across Ecuador have different institutional capacities to begin with⁸ and the overall quality and capacity to strengthen technical tracks and STEM higher education opportunities for PWD will likely vary in parallel. Given this inconsistent capacitation, a set of diagnostics that map the elements of different higher education institutions and career tracks needing improvement for PWD is needed.
- 2.7 The project's approach involves increasing the admission of PWD into adapted technical higher education studies to subsequently support their integration into the labor in the technology sector and thus positively contribute to the reduction of inequality and support their inclusion into society. FyA has taken initial steps in this regard and succeeded in supporting the integration of deaf students into university studies in 2019, with the aid of an on-campus interpreter. This demonstrates how, despite the possibility of access to a tertiary education, a level of accompaniment for PWD is still imperative to ensure they receive the support they need.
- 2.8 To additionally support the integration of PWD into the labor market, this project will foster alliances with businesses and the private sector to ensure the feasibility of employment by 1) aligning the school training and curricula with the specific skills demanded for jobs and 2) ensuring awareness and adequate working conditions for PWD. This is based on the Organic Law on Disabilities of 2012, which seeks to guarantee the rights of PWD, in terms of labor inclusion, stating that firms must have at least 4% PWD as their employees, in relation to their knowledge, physical and individual aptitudes. However, the quality of the job offers currently available to PWD are not always optimal and are usually positions with fewer responsibilities and subsequently lower salaries.⁹
- 2.9 **Complementarity with the Bank's operational program.** Since 2011, the Competitiveness, Technology, and Innovation Division (IFD/CTI) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), in partnership with FyA, and with the support of the Japan Special Fund Poverty Reduction Program (JPO), have supported the educational inclusion of more than 900 children and youths with disabilities in Ecuador. Support has been provided for programs that operate in in the cities of Guayaquil, Quito, Manta and Santo Domingo, which are some of the poorest neighborhoods marked by

⁶ Official document no. MEF-COPBID-2023-0238-O.

⁷ The Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI, as abbreviated in Spanish 2019): <https://oei.int/>.

⁸ See Ecuador's Council for the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CACES, as abbreviated in Spanish): <https://www.caces.gob.ec/>.

⁹ "[Decent work for people with disabilities: promoting rights in the global development agenda](#)". International Labour Organization, 2015.

exclusion, violence and lack of education. Through different projects that applied ICT with a social innovation methodology, the education and sense of opportunity for these children and youths with disabilities was improved, allowing a growing number of PWD to complete their secondary studies and achieve inclusion as active members of society. The projects were: (i) [ATN/IP-11953-EC](#) which consisted of the introduction of ICT for education; (ii) [ATN/JO-15122-EC](#) which sought vocation training for youth with disabilities in Ecuador with a focus on technology-related skills; and (iii) [ATN/JO-18163-EC](#), focused on applying innovation to support the inclusion and well-being of children with disabilities during and after COVID-19 through a technology-based strategy. The results of these projects demonstrate the potential of ICT programs coupled with social innovation interventions as a means to increase academic aspirations and a positive sense of self for PWD, helping integrate them into their communities, reduce their inclusion and increasing the probability that they complete their education and become active members of their communities.¹⁰ This project will also benefit from the initiatives pursued and lessons learned from operation [5774/OC-EC](#), lead by SCL/LMK, which seeks to contribute to improving labor insertion in quality jobs, with a focus on groups with higher barriers to labor insertion in Ecuador, such as is the case for PWD.

- 2.10 This TC seeks to capitalize the lessons learned by FyA in the past decade to fully address the integral development of PWD by complementing this milestone achievement with the pursuit of higher education supported by ICT and employment placement. The integration of technology and technical training for PWD would not only facilitate inclusion but also present important growth opportunities for them, given the formality, resilience, and high salaries of jobs in the technology sector. These educational opportunities can also respond to rising market demand for digital skills which increased prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.11 The project is intended to benefit 100 students directly through spaces and adapted equipment for possible higher studies and employability. However, approximately 300 people will benefit through the spillovers of trained teachers, technological equipment and new institutional capacities that will be put in place. FyA not only has the expertise and knowledge to carry out the activities, but it also has a proven track record of influencing public policies and transferring knowledge and best practices to public educational centers through the Ministry of Education. The success and sustainability of providing the technical knowledge and means to facilitate access of PWD to higher education and later employment are based on a series of characteristics such as: (i) an alliance with the Ministry of Education and a history of working together in favor of the inclusion of PWD into the national education system; (ii) an international network of educational centers in 22 countries of Latin America which would allow the application of lessons learned throughout them, broadening the impact in the region; (iii) feedback and improvement mechanisms currently carried out, which helps the program to adapt to emerging needs; and (iv) the ability to generate their own resources and income through initiatives with the private sector, that can ensure financial stability.
- 2.12 **Strategic alignment.** The Program is consistent with the IDB Group Institutional Strategy: Transforming for Scale and Impact (CA-631) and is aligned with the objective(s) of: (i) reducing poverty and inequality, by facilitating access to education

¹⁰ Data analysis. Carrillo, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Economics, and International Affairs in the Department of Economics and Elliot School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

to children with disabilities in vulnerable contexts; and is also aligned with the operational focus areas of: (i) gender equality and inclusion of diverse population groups in the program's effort of providing work opportunities; (ii) institutional capacity, rule of law and citizen security through the improvement and strengthening of abilities of educational institutions; and (iii) productive development and innovation through the private sector by promoting employment for PWD through partnerships with the private sector. Additionally, the TC is aligned with the objectives of the Japan Special Fund Poverty Reduction Program (JPO) as it will support poverty reduction and social development activities that respond to the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged people. This TC is aligned with the Gender and Diversity Action Framework (GN-2800-13) as it will help to reduce the underrepresentation of a diverse group (PWD) both in education and in their hiring. At the same time, it will promote infrastructure as well as accessible and adapted services (including digital services) that facilitate the autonomy of PWD. It will also support programs designed to cover the differentiated needs of PWD. The TC is also aligned with the IDB Group Country Strategy with Ecuador 2022-2025 (GN-3103-1), as it is focused on strengthening social progress through the promotion of social inclusion while also increasing employment opportunities and labor conditions with an inclusive point of view. Lastly, the project is aligned with the Innovation, Science and Technology Sector Framework Document (GN-2791-13) by strengthening institutional capacities and facilitating material and intellectual resources to promote innovation, science and technology in favor of social inclusion of PWD.

III. Description of components and budget

- 3.1 This program will have a comprehensive approach, addressing problems that limit the access to education and employment of PWD by: (i) increasing technical higher education options for PWD in the communities of Santo Domingo and Guayaquil; (ii) adapting educational programs to any disability (physical or intellectual) and securing the proper methodology to guarantee school completion; (iii) facilitating technology and technological abilities that allow PWD to conclude their higher education studies and access future formal employment; (iv) provide accompaniment in the process of career selection once higher studies are completed; (v) facilitate job placement through alliances created with local business, entrepreneurs and institutions where three possible paths for job inclusion are proposed: independently, accompanied or as sheltered work; and (vi) follow-up with graduates to provide necessary aid or support.
- 3.2 **Component 1: Technology and innovation for higher education for PWD (US\$343,000; IDB: US\$193,000 and Local Counterpart: US\$150,000).** This component will focus on the identification of pedagogical and technological needs of the higher education institutions in the provinces of Pichincha, Guayas, Manabí, and Santo Domingo, to make them accessible for PWD, since these are the educational centers that currently carry out a specialized education program for PWD. Resources will finance: (i) assessment and analysis of institutional capacities and existing inclusive higher education opportunities for PWD;¹¹ (ii) definition of technical equipment, software, physical access, and teaching personnel needs;

¹¹ This mapping will take into consideration broader institutional capacities and distinct career paths offered by different higher education institutions, for example considering Ecuador's Council for the Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CACES, as abbreviated in Spanish) assessments as potential starting points.

(iii) development or acquisition of adapted hardware and software; and (iv) equipment and adjustments to infrastructure for technical and technological training.¹²

- 3.3 **Component 2. Enabling factors for the higher education offer in Ecuador (US\$262,000; IDB: US\$212,000 and Local Counterpart: US\$50,000).** This component will cover the definition of the soft assets that support technology's purpose and ensure its operation. All assets will be implemented in a pilot program executed in the FyA educational centers in Guayaquil and Santo Domingo, given the high number of enrolled PWD in those two centers. The expected results of the pilot are: (i) trained teachers; and (ii) replicable study plans that include the use of adapted technology that lead to ensuring a job for PWD. Resources will finance: (i) development of study plans and curricula that considers the beneficiaries' particular needs disaggregated by types of studies and career tracks; (ii) training in general job skills and in digital skills for emerging technology; and (iii) pedagogical accompaniment training for teachers to support PWD in the definition of their careers.
- 3.4 **Component 3. Facilitating labor market insertion (US\$178,000).** This component will provide adapted job placement solutions for graduates with disabilities by easing their insertion into the job market through partnerships with other educational institutions and businesses. These activities will support students that are already in higher education and will continue to support FyA graduates as the program develops. Resources will finance: (i) specialized accompaniment and mentoring for career definition and job applications; (ii) creation and management of alliances with businesses and the private sector in the technological fields; (iii) management of mentoring, volunteering, training activities and internships with partner companies; (iv) follow-up with graduates; and (v) creation of digital bootcamps to update graduates on emerging technologies and new learning opportunities.
- 3.5 **Component 4. Impact evaluation and dissemination (US\$102,400).** This component will finance the evaluation of the effectiveness of project activities and a study to potentially design and promote a national strategy for the educational continuity of youth with disabilities and their transition into adult working life.
- 3.6 **Component 5. Administration, monitoring and audits (US\$114,600).** This component will finance project implementation costs, including utilities, internet, mobile, telephone, office supplies, office equipment, project management consultancy and external audit of the project.
- 3.7 The total cost of the TC will be US\$1,000,000, of which US\$800,000 will be financed by the Japan Special Fund Poverty Reduction Program, and US\$200,000 (in kind) will be financed with a local counterpart contribution from FyA, which consists of a team of five specialized educators participating in the processes of validation and implementation of the curriculum methodology adapted for students with disabilities.
- 3.8 The distribution of project resources is shown in the indicative budget below:

Indicative Budget (US\$)

Component	IDB/ JPO Funding	Counterpart Funding	Total Funding
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¹² As detailed in the Results Matrix, equipment and adjustments to infrastructure would take up 77% of all the component (including IDB and counterpart support). From this 77%, 66% would be designated for equipment, while 34% would be destined to infrastructure, which needs minor adjustments.

Component	IDB/ JPO Funding	Counterpart Funding	Total Funding
Component 1. Technology and innovation for higher education for PWD	193,000	150,000	343,000
Consulting for the assessment of current institutional capacities and inclusive education offer	21,500	17,000	38,500
Consulting for the definition of technological, teaching and inclusion needs.	21,500	17,000	38,500
Educational equipment for PWD to access higher education.	80,000	65,000	145,000
Adapted software that responds to the learning needs of PWD and the technological skill demanded in the job market.	20,000	15,000	35,000
Classrooms and workshops infrastructure adapted for higher education	50,000	36,000	86,000
Component 2. Enabling factors for the higher education offer in Ecuador	212,000	50,000	262,000
Consulting for the design, validation and implementation of an adapted higher education study plan and curricula offer for PWD	100,000	20,000	120,000
Consulting for the design, validation and implementation of workshops for training in general job skills.	71,000	17,000	88,000
Teachers' training in the pedagogical accompaniment of PWD in their career definition and selection.	41,000	13,000	54,000
Component 3. Facilitating labor market insertion	178,000	-	178,000
Consulting for the design, validation and implementation of digital bootcamps	20,000		
Consulting for follow up action plan.	20,000		
Career Prosper Consultancy: Empowering PWD in Job Readiness	46,000		
Liaison Partnership Advocate Consultancy: Strengthening Opportunities for Employing PWD	46,000		
Scholar Fund Consultancy: Managing of volunteering, training activities and internships with partner companies	46,000		
Component 4. Impact evaluation and dissemination	102,400	-	102,400
Evaluation study	42,200		

Component	IDB/ JPO Funding	Counterpart Funding	Total Funding
Proposal for national strategy	60,200		
Component 5. Administration, monitoring and audits	114,600	-	114,600
Financial Audit	44,600		
Project Management and Coordination Consultant	65,400		
Operating expenses	4,600		
Total	800,000	200,000	1,000,000

IV. Executing agency and execution structure

- 4.1 The IDB will provide Cooperation Supervision through IFD/CTI. Technical supervision will be provided under an IFD/CTI Specialist.
- 4.2 The executing agency for the project will be FyA. FyA is a private non-profit organization that provides educational services and social support to the most vulnerable sectors in Ecuador. FyA has been working in Ecuador since 1964 and providing educational opportunities for children from poor and excluded families. FyA has extensive experience in the execution of technical cooperation operations financed by the Bank.¹³ The most recent IDB project received the IDB's Superheroes of Development 2021 Award.
- 4.3 The project executing agency will submit semi-annual progress reports to the Bank throughout the project disbursement period (within 60 days after the conclusion of each semester), and a final evaluation (within 90 days from the date of the last disbursement). The final evaluation will be carried out by external consultants financed with the resources of the Bank's contribution.
- 4.4 Project execution will be coordinated by a program manager, who will: (i) plan, coordinate and supervise the execution of the activities established in the project components; (ii) prepare the annual work plans; (iii) prepare the terms of reference to identify, select, hire and evaluate the performance of external consultants; (iv) prepare the semiannual progress reports; and (v) coordinate the contracting of the external audit of the project.
- 4.5 **Procurement.** FyA will carry out the procurement of goods and consulting services required for the execution of this TC in accordance with the Standard Bidding Documents by request for goods through international competitive bidding (GN-2349-15/GN-2350-15). The decision of their direct hiring as Project Director and consultant of the Evaluation Study is based on their execution of these duties for previous technical cooperations including [ATN/IP-11953-EC](#), [ATN/JO-15122-EC](#) and [ATN/JO-18163-EC](#). It is also supported by FyA's expertise and knowledge to assess and define the educational needs of students with disabilities as well as their proven

¹³ [ATN/IP-11953-EC](#) and [ATN/JO-15122-EC](#).

track record of working with the Ministry of Education, private partners and other educational institutions that would allow the project and its objectives to be carried out.

- 4.6 **Financial Management.** FyA will carry out the financial management of project resources in accordance with the provisions of the Financial Management Guidelines for IDB Financed Projects (OP-273-12). The executing agency will deliver audited financial statements for the project within 120 days from the expiration date of the disbursement period or any extension thereof. The audit will be carried out by an independent auditing firm acceptable to the Bank.

V. Major issues

- 5.1 Human talent availability risks: the lack of sufficiently qualified and specialized personnel in vocational and technical job training and using assistive technology for PWD to carry out the project. This concern would be addressed especially through Component 1, by carrying out the assessment of the institutional capacities and later covering the specific teaching staff needs. FyA is currently working with local universities to strengthen master programs and trainings in favor of diversity and education of PWD. They are also a part of global initiatives for disabilities in which different organizations share and exchange their experience and lessons learned.
- 5.2 Lack of commitment from learning institutions to adapt their spaces, programs and study plans for PWD. This issue would be confronted through advocacy with the government and with the Inclusive Education System with the academic models and proposals that contribute to national awareness. FyA has successfully influenced public policies by working alongside the Ministry of Education and public entities and their effort in educating and building awareness among other institutions and their staff contributes to gradual shifts in the inclusive culture.
- 5.3 Limited awareness of the productive sector: lack of knowledge on how to relate to and work with young people with disabilities in an adequate manner. Difficulties in incorporating inclusion into their business plan. To solve this, FyA would initially create awareness among the business community about PWD in the country. FyA would also share the role that the organization plays in that regard, presenting the educational centers, academic plans and potential aptitudes for employment. To eventually reach an agreement of internships and employment, FyA would take initial steps in seeking mentorships and training for PWD that could eventually convert into employment opportunities.
- 5.4 Possible delays to validate all study plans and define associations with possible employers. To mitigate this risk, the team has begun: (i) the processing of the official requirements for the creation of school curricula; and (ii) collaborating with public and private higher institutions to understand the proper operation of this kind of institution. At the same time, current partnerships with private businesses are being reviewed to identify those with the conditions to employ PWD.

VI. Exceptions to Bank policy

- 6.1 No exceptions to Bank policy are required for this technical cooperation.

VII. Environmental and Social Aspects

- 7.1 This Technical Cooperation is not intended to finance pre-feasibility or feasibility studies of specific investment projects or environmental and social studies associated with them; therefore, this TC does not have applicable requirements of the Bank's Environmental and Social Policy Framework (ESPF).

Required Annexes:

[Request from the Client_79869.pdf](#)

[Results Matrix_43597.pdf](#)

[Terms of Reference_55089.pdf](#)

[Procurement Plan_66470.pdf](#)