

TC ABSTRACT

I. Basic Project Data

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| ▪ Country/Region: | ECUADOR/CAN - Andean Group |
| ▪ TC Name: | Support to Strategies to Reduce Chronic Malnutrition and Promote Early Childhood Development in Ecuador |
| ▪ TC Number: | EC-T1489 |
| ▪ Team Leader/Members: | RUBIO CODINA, MARTA (SCL/SPH) Team Leader; PINZON ENCISO, LEONARDO ENRIQUE (SCL/SPH) Alternate Team Leader; SAN ROMAN VUCETICH, CRISTINA (SCL/SPH) Alternate Team Leader; BRITO VERA, JUAN CARLOS (CAN/CEC); RODRIGUEZ PINEDA, MARIO VINICIO (VPC/FMP); ESCUDERO, CAROLINA (VPC/FMP); GUERRA, MARTHA M. (SCL/SPH); ASAKURA, MAYA (SCL/SCL); PARRA HINCAPIE, JULIETH ANDREA (SCL/SPH); JIMENEZ MOSQUERA, JAVIER I. (LEG/SGO); CASCO, MARIO A. (ITE/IPS) |
| ▪ Taxonomy: | Operational Support |
| ▪ Number and name of operation supported by the TC: | Strengthening of quality services of early childhood development - EC-L1235 Institutional Strengthening for Competitiveness Program - EC-L1250 Social Expenditure Protection and Employment Recovery Support Program - Phase II - EC-L1277 |
| ▪ Date of TC Abstract: | 08 May 2022 |
| ▪ Beneficiary: | TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT ECUADOR GROWS WITHOUT CHILD CHRONIC MALNUTRITION |
| ▪ Executing Agency: | INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK |
| ▪ IDB funding requested: | US\$1,500,000.00 |
| ▪ Local counterpart funding: | US\$0.00 |
| ▪ Disbursement period: | 30 months |
| ▪ Types of consultants: | Individuals; Firms |
| ▪ Prepared by Unit: | SCL/SPH - Social Protection & Health |
| ▪ 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 Update to the Institutional Strategy 2010-2020: | Social inclusion and equality |

II. Objective and Justification

- 2.1 The objective of this Technical Cooperation (TC) is to support the Government of Ecuador in the design, implementation and/or monitoring of strategies aimed at improving the nutritional status and early childhood development (ECD) outcomes of children under 5 years-of-age in the country, thus improving their wellbeing. In doing so, this TC will fund activities to: (i) support the intersectoral coordination role of the Technical Secretariat Ecuador Grows without Chronic Malnutrition (Secretaría Técnica Ecuador Crece Sin Desnutrición, or Technical Secretariat hereafter); (ii) develop a comprehensive behavioral change strategy that promotes best infant and young children feeding practices among vulnerable populations served by the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Salud Pública, MSP) and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social, MIES) and monitor its progress; and (iii) design and implement a module to collect ECD outcomes as part of the 2022 National Survey of Child Malnutrition (Encuesta Nacional de Desnutrición Infantil, ENDI), collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de

Estadísticas y Censos, INEC) and institutionalize the collection of developmental data alongside that of data on children's health and nutritional status since all three are essential and integral components of children's wellbeing.

- 2.2 Child malnutrition is high in Ecuador. At 23%, chronic malnutrition rates (stunting or height-for-age below 2 standard deviations, SD) are the second highest among children 0-5 years in Latin America and the Caribbean (ENSANUT 2018), with higher prevalence among indigenous and rural populations. In parallel, overweight and obesity rates have increased to 13.2% (from 9.1% in 2012), resulting in 5.3% of under 5-year-olds being both stunted and obese (body mass index-for-age over 2 SD), which is known as the double burden of malnutrition. Related, vulnerable children in Ecuador suffer from substantial developmental delays, with differences in vocabulary levels equivalent to 16 months-of-age between children of more and less educated mothers by age 5. This puts vulnerable children at a large disadvantage even before they start primary school.
- 2.3 Stunting is a key indicator of wellbeing. It affects child survival, cognitive, language and motor development, school achievement, and long-term health and productivity in adulthood (Victora et al., 2008). Comprehensive behavioral change interventions are a promising way of improving nutritional outcomes, particularly if coupled with hygiene, sanitation, and health interventions (Bhutta et al., 2008; Martinez et al., 2018). Therefore, intersectoral articulation is critical.
- 2.4 In late 2020, Ecuador launched the "National Strategy Ecuador Grows Without Chronic Malnutrition" to prevent and reduce stunting by means of (i) a package of prioritized actions—the Paquete Priorizado, which includes pre-natal controls, vaccination schemes for pregnant women and children, micronutrient supplementation for children under 2, and well-child check-ups; (ii) a nominal monitoring information system; and (iii) a strategic plan involving resource mobilization, local articulation, and human resources' trainings, among other critical actions. The Strategy is coordinated by the Technical Secretariat, which has the mandate to articulate public agencies working on preventing and reducing child chronic malnutrition such as the MSP, MIES and INEC. It is partly supported by several Bank loan operations, either disbursing (EC-L1235) or in preparation (EC-L1277; reformulation of EC-L1250). (1)
- 2.5 Coordination with nutritional issues and other donors. This TC will contribute to Ecuador's National Strategy to prevent and reduce chronic malnutrition by supporting supervision activities of these loans and funding the development of key components that will complement them—i.e., co-financing of JICA under the existing CORE (Framework Agreement for Cooperation for Economic Recovery and Social Inclusion) between JICA and the Bank. To this end, we will define with JICA their level of involvement in the monitoring of activities, possibly through a Platform on Nutrition that coordinates the country's malnutrition agenda led by the IDB, JICA and UNICEF among other donors. (1) EC-L1235 aims to improve the quality of MIES ECD services, including their nutritional components. EC-L1277 (\$250M) is a Policy Based Loan designed to protect social spending and promote employment recovery. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is adding \$200M in parallel co-financing supporting an additional component to prevent and reduce child chronic malnutrition. Finally, the reformulation of EC-L1250 aims to reduce child malnutrition by expanding the coverage and quality of Paquete Priorizado and strengthening malnutrition monitoring strategies.

III. Description of Activities and Outputs

- 3.1 **Component I: Strengthen intersectoral coordination.** It will support the coordinating role of the Technical Secretariat, hence contributing to strengthening institutional governance. It will focus on developing technical guidelines, educational campaigns and support staff trainings. It will also fund the improvement of nationwide information systems to monitor the progress of Ecuador's strategies to reduce child (chronic)

malnutrition and identify areas for improvement, in alignment with the aims of the JICA parallel co-financing of PBP EC-L1277.

- 3.2 **Component II: Promote behavioral change strategies to reduce child (chronic) malnutrition.** It will fund the design of a comprehensive behavioral-based strategy to improve infant and young children feeding practices among vulnerable populations, through nutrition education counselling and participatory play-based activities, as a complement to the Paquete Priorizado. It will support a literature review, a policy dialogue with government agencies and experts, a targeting study, and a formative-participatory research process to develop the intervention and its materials.
- 3.3 **Component III: Introduce an ECD module in ENDI.** It will fund the inclusion of an ECD module in the ENDI. It will support data collection activities, including test materials, enumerator training, data analysis, and results dissemination. ENDI's data will be used to monitor child malnutrition indicators. Adding ECD indicators will further our understanding of the relationship between stunting and child development, and contribute to monitor the progress of activities in EC-L1235 and the reformulation of EC-L1250.
- 3.4 **Component IV: Coordination and monitoring.** This will fund a local consultant that supports the management, coordination, and supervision of all project activities on the ground; as well as support the Platform on Nutrition and efforts to disseminate its activities along with the results of this TC (including any translation and editing requirements).

IV. Budget

Indicative Budget

| Activity/Component | IDB/ Fund Funding | Counterpart Funding | Total Funding |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Strengthen intersectoral coordination | US\$180,695.00 | US\$0.00 | US\$180,695.00 |
| Promote behavioral change strategies to reduce child (chronic) malnutrition | US\$553,680.00 | US\$0.00 | US\$553,680.00 |
| Introduce an ECD module in ENDI | US\$625,000.00 | US\$0.00 | US\$625,000.00 |
| Coordination and monitoring | US\$140,625.00 | US\$0.00 | US\$140,625.00 |
| Total | US\$1,500,000.00 | US\$0.00 | US\$1,500,000.00 |

V. Executing Agency and Execution Structure

- 5.1 The TC will be executed by the IDB, through the Social Protection and Health Division in Ecuador's Country Office (CAN/SPH).
- 5.2 Given the existing loan operations between the Bank and the Government of Ecuador—either disbursing or in preparation—that address child malnutrition and child development, the Bank is best placed to coordinate activities among all agencies involved, ensuring a solid and articulated agenda that avoids duplicities. Furthermore, the Bank team has the relevant technical knowledge and expertise and will hire external experts on the subjects, as required, to ensure the timely and efficient execution of resources as per project needs.
- 5.3 The Unit Responsible for contracting and disbursements will be the Bank Country Office in Ecuador (CAN/CCE). The Bank will contract firm and individual consultant services, and the production and purchase of materials and licenses, as required, in accordance with current policies and procedures. Component III. will require contracting a government agency (INEC) by single source selection.

VI. Project Risks and Issues

- 6.1 We foresee two main interrelated risks: (i) challenges in the effective and timely articulation of all different agencies; and (ii) changes in government authorities before the end of the TC, which could change priorities at the national level, and potentially restructure the Technical Secretariat and any other relevant areas in the Ministries.
- 6.2 To mitigate these risks, the Bank team will: (i) work closely with the authorities and technical teams in all involved agencies to ensure constant communication and coordination; and (ii) promote ownership by government national and local authorities and technical teams, actively engage in the dissemination of the TC activities, and collaborate with other multilaterals (i.e., JICA, UNICEF) and civic society organizations working on the area (i.e., RENDI, National Network on Child Nutrition).

VII. Environmental and Social Classification

- 7.1 The ESG classification for this operation is "undefined".