



Fundación Ayuda en Acción

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Ayuda en Acción submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, in advance of the visit to Spain.

I. About the foundation Ayuda en Acción:

[Fundación Ayuda en Acción](http://www.ayudaenaccion.org) (hereinafter Ayuda en Acción) is an independent organization that has been fighting against poverty, exclusion and inequality since 1981, promoting dignity and solidarity for building a fairer world. Ayuda en Acción aspires to a world where people help each other and can develop their capacities, fully enjoy their human rights and participate through democratic channels in the decisions that affect their lives, so that they can play a leading role in their own development.

Ayuda en Acción works in 20 countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe, supporting 1.5 million people.

II. Context analysis in Spain.

- Main challenges faced by Spain in fulfilling ODS4 in terms of equality and non-discrimination:

In spite of having one of the highest levels of child poverty rate in Europe, Spain invests poorly and unequally in the social protection of children and their families: 1.3% of GDP compared to 2.4% of the European average¹, ranking 23rd out of 28 EU countries. The scholarship system, far from promoting access and educational continuity for students in vulnerable situations, generates a very low redistributive impact, thus failing to fulfil its compensatory function in the face of inequalities of origin. The insufficient state investment in scholarships and aid for studies in primary and secondary education - 2.2% of public expenses on education compared to 3.8% in the EU² - makes it impossible to cover the so-called indirect costs of education (including school canteen, transport, school supplies, educational reinforcement and extracurricular activities costs) in an equitable way.

In our country, Education is a decentralized competence, and budgetary dependent on the Autonomous Communities and not on the State, so there is territorial inequality in investment and allocation of resources. In some cases, this gap amounts up to 50%: for example, Basque

¹ Save the Children, 2014. Eurostat <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

² Una Agenda 2030 transformadora para las personas y el planeta. Propuestas para la acción política. Informe de la sociedad civil española 2018.

https://futuroencomun.net/wpcontent/uploads/2018/10/informe_desde_la_sociedad_civil_final.pdf



Contry invests 6,502 € per pupil, versus an investment of 3,945 € per pupil in the Community of Madrid.³; Added to this are the obstacles presented by the lengthy processing and resolution of applications for scholarships, the disparity of requirements among different public administrations involved and the limited flexibility of the Administration in granting scholarships in some Communities.

School segregation, understood as the unequal distribution of children from families with fewer resources in the schools, is a further major challenge for the Spanish education system. The segregation index in Spain has increased by 13.4% in the last 10 years to reach 0.31, making Spain the sixth country with the highest scores in the EU⁴.

We also find that educational exclusion is not homogeneous. Both school drop-out and failure rates, as well as performance in basic skills, are worse among the migrant population and in households with a low socio-economic and cultural background, with differences of up to 30 percentage points depending on the academic level of the progenitors. According to 2017 data, 30% of students with a migrant background from countries outside the EU leave school early, almost doubling the early drop-out rate of students with Spanish origin (15.6%). There is even greater inequality in the case of Roma students, whose drop-out rate reaches 63.7%, more than three times the national average (19.4%)⁵.

Another factor of exclusion from the current educational system is the lack of public investment and universalization of the pre-primary education from zero to three years, a decisive period in children's emotional and intellectual development.

With regard to youth, Spain has the highest rate of early leavers from education and training in Europe (17.9% among young people aged 18 to 24), well above the European average (EU 28 - 10.6%)⁶. Moreover, there are striking differences between the territories, with the southern and eastern regions of Spain exceeding up to 20% in this index⁷. On the other hand, the percentage of young people (between 20 and 34 years old) neither in education or work stands at 19.6%, also well above the EU-28 (16.5%)⁸.

III. Ayuda en Acción programme “Aquí también” (Here too), : support for children, adolescents and their families at risk of social exclusion

The work of Ayuda en Acción in Spain is channeled through the national program *Here too* (Aquí también). This intervention is aimed at tackling situations of social exclusion that mainly affect children and adolescents and their families, trying to mitigate the factors involved in the

³ www.infanciaendatos.es : inversión pública en educación

⁴ Save The Children 2018

⁵ Fundación secretariado gitano: https://www.gitanos.org/quehacemos/areas/educacion/en_cifras.html

⁶ fuente: Eurostat, mayo 2019 (datos 2018). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=File:2018data_Early_school_leavers-02.jpg

⁷ www.infanciaendatos.es

⁸ Eurostat mayo 2019, https://www.abc.es/economia/abci-mapa-ninis-europa-espana-entre-paises-mas-reducido-tasa-desde-2014-201905311836_noticia.html



intergenerational transmission of poverty. The goal of the program is to prevent the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality situations, as well as preventing that the experience of growing up in a poor household determines an equally vulnerable situation when these children become adults.e.

To this end, the program focuses on:

- Ensuring the permanence in the educational system and school success.
- Promoting the improvement of the living conditions of families, focusing especially on women.
- Promoting mutual support, intercultural coexistence and active citizenship.

Our approach is based on collaboration with a network of more than 90 primary and secondary schools where we implement our intervention. These are public schools, with a student population at risk of social exclusion, coming from families with a lack of employment and/or precarious jobs. There are also contexts of school segregation and the risk of ghettification.

Specifically, the work undertaken by Ayuda en Acción is structured around the following thematic lines:

- Educational inclusion: scholarships and grants for food, school supplies and leisure activities.
- Healthy lifestyles: school meals scholarships, training in healthy lifestyles for children and families.
- Educational innovation through technology: training in coding, technological labs for teenagers
- Educational innovation through music: children's choirs, creation of children's music bands..
- Women's employment: training and support for employment and entrepreneurship among the unemployed mothers of the students with whom we work.
- Networking and active citizenship: mentoring to improve reading skills; volunteering to enhance knowledge about SDGs among the youth.

IV. Child poverty and access to equitable, inclusive and quality education.

- In our 2017 report "The shadow of educational investment in Spain. The search for free and equitable education"⁹ (attached to this contribution as **Annex 2**), Ayuda en Acción provides its own analysis of some factors related to situations of poverty and vulnerability in Spain. This report identifies several indicators related to educational inequality, some of which are elaborated below: The lack of integration between the activities of schools during school time ("formal education") and non-school time ("non-formal education") hinders the fulfilment of the right to education, play and leisure.

⁹ <https://ayudaenaccion.org/ong/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/INFORME-EQUIDAD-EDUCATIVA-2017.pdf>



- The lack of transparency regarding data is a barrier to measuring the impact and assessing education policies, as well as to fully understanding the origin of the problems families find to adequately understand the regulations, management and resolution times that guarantee their rights.
- The confirmation of the non-gratuity of education in Spain (indirect costs of education): Investment in the so-called “indirect costs of education” – such as school meals, support scholarships, school equipment, transport and extracurricular activities – is essential to guarantee equity and inclusion in education, as well as the full realization of human rights. Now, the burden of all these costs has been transferred to the family sphere.
- Equitable education is limited and conditioned by three factors: the inadequate public investment in scholarships and aid, the lack of coordination between the National, regional and Local Administrations, and the deficient functioning of the protocols to access these scholarships.

V. Specific practices of socio-educational intervention with groups at risk of social exclusion and the conclusions of our experience by projects and groups.

- Direct grants to compensate for inequalities:

In Spain, Central Government is not the only actor responsible for investment in education. Local and regional administrations also have key responsibilities for education policies and social services that are directly related to educational equity, such as school meals and schoolbook scholarships. This level of decentralization requires a refined coordination among all the administrations.

In practice, it is necessary to fill the gaps that are not covered by the public protection system. Ayuda en Acción annually covers more than 2,000 scholarships for school meals, more than 3,500 grants for educational material and more than 8,000 grants for extracurricular activities.

- Our experience with technological innovation projects:

Our technology training Projects [Gen10s](#) (involving 4,000 students) and [L@bs4Opps](#) (involving 100 students) are socio-educational proposals focused on teaching the use of technological tools related to programming, robotics and design, as a means of improving students' skills and contributing to their educational success.

Our focus on this subject is justified by the incidence of the digital gap in our country, specially among families with the lowest incomes: One in three households (31.5%) with an income below 900 euros does not have access to the Internet, while 99% of households with an income above 2,500 euros say they have it¹⁰.

- Our experience with the female employability project: *Mujeres en Acción (Women in Action)*

¹⁰ UGT 2019 : La brecha digital en España



Women in Action (Mujeres en Acción) is a project of integrated employability itineraries targeting the mothers of the children attending the schools where Ayuda en Acción works. We assume that the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the families will have a positive impact on the wellbeing and the living conditions of their sons and daughters.

Spain faces a significant gender gap in the labour market: in the first quarter of 2019, the unemployment rate for women was 16.74%, compared to 12.91% for men¹¹.

This gender gap in unemployment rates is wider among women with low levels of education.. According to data from the 2018 annual Labour Force Survey (EPA), 92.78% of the non-active population who said that were not participating in the labour market because they were responsible for domestic care work (care of children or sick, disabled or elderly adults) were women; only 7.22% of the people who justified their inactivity for these reasons were men.

The profile of the women with whom Ayuda en Acción fits these macro data: low training and scarce or little work experience, mainly based on irregular and intermittent employment; they are responsible for the care of school-age children, often being lone mother families. . They usually belong to national ethnic minorities (mainly Roma), of foreign origin, with open files in social services, etc..

Ayuda en Acción is currently working with a total of 300 women with this profile in 8 Autonomous Communities throughout Spain.

We hope that our description of the Spanish context of poverty, with a special emphasis on educational inequality, will be of particular interest to you, and we remain at your disposal to meet and share the details of the information sent.

¹¹ Encuesta de Población Activa. Active Population Survey from National Statistical Institute.2019



Annexes (in Spanish):

Annex 1: *La sombra de la inversión educativa en España, en busca de la gratuidad y la equidad en la educación.*- (The shadow of educational investment in Spain, in search of free and fair education. 2017 (shared authorship between Ayuda en Acción and Educo)

Annex 2: *Here Too* programme presentation report