



An idea on the march. Providing shoes and other essentials is a way for the government to encourage children to take up their place in school. CREDIT: STEVE ESTVANIK / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Following the example of El Salvador, the government of Peru has announced that it will hand out new shoes to 2.3 million schoolchildren to help families send their children to school.

School shoes idea moves to Peru

World Footwear first became aware of governments investing in school shoes when the Argentinian government launched an initiative at the end of 2008 to convince companies throughout the leather value chain to work together to make children's shoes in Argentina from Argentinian leather, making them available in the nation's shops at prices similar levels to those of imported shoes. It said at the time it would set up a credit of up to \$150 million at the national bank to help the industry achieve this aim.

In 2011, with a repeat in 2012, the Salvadorian government took this idea a stage further by buying school shoes from local manufacturers and handing them out to families as part of a package that included a uniform, books and writing materials to make sure that even children from the least privileged backgrounds would have everything they needed to be able to attend school.

As seen in El Salvador

It is the Salvadorian model that the government of Peru is now following, including shoes and clothes for schoolchildren

in a wider domestically focused procurement project, MYPERÚ, a play on words combining, obviously, the name of the country with the widespread term for micro- and small-sized businesses, exactly the type of manufacturing company that the government wants to benefit. It has also made the point that this project is a way to help manufacturers in Peru in the face of a downturn in business from the widespread problems in the global economy.

Changes for children

Peru's beleaguered ministry of education (MINEDU) has spent much of its energy in recent months battling with striking teachers. A dispute broke out on June 20 over proposed reforms to teachers' training and employment conditions, leading to protests outside the ministry. In the midst of this, the ministry announced that the first shoes made as part of the MYPERÚ programme, around 1.5 million pairs, were ready for distribution. Children aged between six and 13 at more than 40,000 schools throughout the South American country will receive the new shoes along with, as in El Salvador, a uniform and school materials. In some very remote areas, the project

will even fund new bicycles for children to be able to travel to school. So, as well as manufacturing companies gaining from this, the children will benefit too.

On this subject, the government has said from the outset that the shoes that Peruvian companies produce as part of MYPERÚ will be part of its attempts to encourage wider social inclusion. Children in all regions of this exceptionally diverse country will benefit, but those in mountain, coastal and rainforest communities will be among the first recipients of the products.

Quality assured

The country's minister for production, Gladys Triveño, insists that the quality of shoes produced by manufacturers for the programme will be of high quality. "And they will have to meet strict technical specifications," she adds. "All school shoes that we procure for the programme will be subject to the necessary testing at the hands of CITEccal (the national centre for technological innovation for leather and footwear). And no one will take part, no one will make any shoes for the programme, unless they have set up as a formal company."

Around 230 footwear manufacturers, some of them very small, won the right to take part after MINEDU first published a series of guidelines in April. The 1.5 million pairs that were ready for distribution in July went first into specially hired warehouses in Lima, Trujillo, Arequipa and Puno waiting for the schools situation to calm down and for the education authorities to claim the footwear for the children. The president of the country, Ollanta Humala, said during a visit at the start of August to Trujillo (Peru's most iconic shoe-producing city) that including shoes for schoolchildren in the MYPERÚ project had been a great idea. He said there were around 700 operators in the Trujillo district of La Libertad alone who had already benefited from taking part.

Positive role models

Ms Triveño says these small manufacturing companies are offering more than shoes to the children, but also a good example of the need to work hard and take pride in what you do. "Yes, these are companies that are contributing to our gross domestic product and creating jobs, and that's of great importance. But we also need to pay tribute to the great example they give every day of hard work and dedication. They are entrepreneurs and they have come through some very difficult times. But they have kept going and we are delighted now to be able to help them find new business opportunities through MYPERÚ and I'm certain this will help them go out and find other work on the back of this."

It's clear from this that the footwear industry is well on the way to holding up its part of the bargain, making quality shoes for a unit price, the ministry has reported, of just over \$15, which the government is paying from its overall MYPERÚ budget of \$145 million. Families will receive the shoes for free.

We have raised in previous articles the question of what would happen to the global footwear industry and the global leather supply chain if the governments of more populous countries than Peru, or El Salvador or Argentina decided to emulate the shoes for schoolchildren idea. Imagine a similar move in Mexico, Nigeria, Indonesia, or South Africa, or even in India or China. The world would sell out of leather and order books at footwear manufacturing companies of all sizes would be full to overflowing. 🔄



Peruvian schoolchildren. The government is paying to distribute 2.3 million pairs of good-quality shoes to children all over the country.

CREDIT: MINEDU-PERU



Leather and footwear industry technology specialist Adriana Ríos (far left) at a meeting earlier this year with minister for production, Gladys Triveño (third from the left).

CREDIT: PERUVIAN GOVERNMENT



Minister for production, Gladys Triveño insists the project will benefit children as well as manufacturers.

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