

Overview: Ecuador is not doing well economically and each week more people are losing their jobs. They spend less money in the markets which impacts greatly on the poor who are the majority of our clients. Additionally the local volcano, Tungurahua, only 20 miles away, has been quite active recently, which worries the families, the ash spoils crops and injures animals, the noise disturbs sleep, and the gases cause bronchitic problems. The Brexit vote and the subsequent drop of the pound against the dollar of 15% means that the value of our transfers has become less.

Techo Propio: The Co-operative which ran Techo Propio (this is a concept we do not have) was formally wound up as required by law, which means that although for the moment we can continue using the rooms, there is no security guard, so that our equipment is at risk, and VDO need to find a new place for the centre. The secondary school children have set themselves up in three teams to lead the book reading and the recording of stories for video and drama productions. In return they received economic help with the expenses associated with school (between \$10 and \$25 per month). The main activities taking place in the library are board and creative games, toys and play for younger siblings, with good participation from the 51 members. VDO have run short computer courses for primary school children, supplementary classes from specialist teachers in Maths, English and Technical Drawing to enable secondary school children to pass their school year. If children do not understand the foundations of Spanish grammar imagine how difficult it is for them to learn English. All the children were successful in their re-takes. Sixty seven new books have been bought alongside magazines. The choir continues to enjoy their singing.

Mocha: If you remember this was the first village in which we set up a centre in 2003, and withdrew because of problems with the head teacher in the small village school, which is now closed. VDO have gone back there at the request of the parents, who were worried at the standard at the local school, the lack of English teaching and giving no experience of computers. A house has been rented, repaired and painted and some heating provided. Mocha is at an altitude of about 9000 feet, making it very cold. They welcomed the return of the library, some of the parents were our original 'children' 13 years ago. Gladys has given two short computer courses, and taught some English vocabulary. Fifteen children mostly under 8 use the library. The children have started a dance group.

We have an English ex-volunteer going out next month for about 6 weeks, who will be staying in Techo Propio and helping in both centres. This greatly pleases everyone as the English classes are being re-instated at the primary school but the teachers themselves feel they are ill prepared for giving the classes. VDO may be able to help here.

Equipment: We have four computers, a projector, a printer with scanner, a photocopier all in reasonable condition. We would like to buy two new computers but we will hold back on this until we can be sure of security.

Taitakuna or 'god' children. These children are individually sponsored. There are sixteen children with fourteen sponsors, nine in our AFET group, four former volunteers one of whom lives in the USA and one, a friend of Andrew lives in Quito. Of course the whole family benefits from the food and support. A total of 46 children are covered by the programme. There were the usual monthly meetings with the families when 84 food parcels were distributed (rice, lentils, bean, wheat and pea flour, oats and sardines). Where needed trousers, sweaters, socks and blouses were also given. In these times of poverty the parents, many of whom are single parents, really appreciate this help.

One of our original sponsored children is now at University, she will be a good role model. A great success for someone who might not have even gone to secondary school. Fifteen are in secondary school, twenty five in primary and five in the kindergarten. Ecuador now massively uses the internet to support education and of course none of these families have computers or internet access, so we support their use of internet cafes.

Health Fund: This is funded by the tax AFET can claim via Gift Aided donations. This semester we have continued to pay for the medication required for a child with a bad skin allergy, two children have orthodontic treatment, one girl needs glasses, and one girl requires treatment for recurrent bronchitis.

Conclusion: As you can all see the funds we are able to send out are stretched at this time, but the support they provide to needy families is vital. Any help that you feel able to give would be very welcome. And as usual in September I will be circulating information about our Christmas campaign. I know that people are sending fewer cards, but do consider buying those you need from us. Please note that unusually almost 100% of your purchase goes to the charity as the production of the cards is sponsored.