

General Introduction

Over the last couple of years there have been a number of changes to the way VDO functions and what we are able to do. However, the main thrust is as it has always been, to try to break the cycle of poverty caused by lack of education of poor children, whether in poor rural or urban areas.

The Ecuadorian government is a revolutionary, left wing organization and every week they issue new laws. A recent one forbids foreign NGOs (non governmental organizations) and charities to act independently of the government, the main objective being to control the money. Additionally the schools themselves are forbidden to receive external help without the money going through the school accounts with the control in the hands of the school directors. VDO stopped being a registered charity three years ago because of the opportunities it gave for money to be siphoned off, so is fortunately not affected. This year a teacher in the Techo Propio school asked Maria Teresa to give her money directly, some teachers saw an opportunity! We therefore work outside the school system. The Government is giving computers and broad band connections to schools, unfortunately it is not used to advantage as many teachers are not well prepared, do not, themselves use computers, know nothing about the internet, and have little interest in learning. Many of them, particularly in rural schools, are time servers and do not want to work more than the minimum. We will be using our computer centres in a different way, not providing classes in school time but making them readily accessible to the population.

COMPUTER CENTRES

In Techo Propio 133 children and 22 adults participated in courses at the computer centre. We have bought one new computer and gave two of the older ones, which could not stand up to the heavy usage by children, to families in Techo Propio who were prepared to provide a computer centre for their immediate neighbourhood. Some help with the adaptation to the room and electrical supply was given along with a broadband connection. They seem very popular sometimes with twenty children in the house and much informal learning occurs. Courses about basic concepts and programmes were provided for all the school children two days a week. Adults continued with courses in advanced typing, basic and intermediate computer skills. Classes took place two evenings a week for two hours with twenty two adults attending. The cost of broadband is expensive at \$24-\$36 per month. . However we feel the internet access for these isolated communities must be continued and this is expensive. We have the funds guaranteed for this year and we will need to raise them for next.

In Sangoliqui the school director and the teachers are very enthusiastic. There are six computers. One computer and a printer were donated by AFET. All 105 children received computer tuition, with the teacher paid by the government and the teaching materials given by AFET. Seventh grade children attended for extra tuition on Saturday mornings by a local University student, David Carcelen, paid by AFET. The Ambato office in is used as an administrative base, as a library for the families from el Porvenir-Acapulco who like to remain associated with us, and for them to use the computers when they wish. The office also has a broadband connection.

Christmas Card contest. This contest took place in June. Sixty enthusiastic children attended with all materials and a snack being provided by VDO. Five pictures were sent to the UK for Adrienne and Ros to make the final selection. The charming picture by Bryan Gualcapi was chosen. The cards will be available by the end of August when the picture will be put on the web site.

With the downturn in economic activity throughout the world, the number of volunteers has dropped even for charities with the biggest advertising budget. So VDO is now functioning with very few volunteers to help in activities and extra English classes are not occurring. In order to continue our service to the communities we now use local volunteers and pay them a small sum to oversee the computer studies of the children in the communities. We have found that this gives a double benefit as the volunteers themselves learn much by teaching the children and in some cases this has helped them to get on courses and to find work.

LIBRARY

This has been a big success since its foundation. Two hundred new books were bought, and ten booklets for the computer courses were printed. Twenty books were repaired with fifty very old and worn books being given to children. There is now a total stock of 1,375 books. There are fourteen library groups with 246 members.. Magazines were bought for parents to read who come into the office. In Techo Propio a local thirteen year old, Jocelyn, helped Maria Teresa with the exchange. In Sangoliqui, there were three exchanges. Diana our home grown author, continues to write stories. There were three movie presentations 'Baby, a Happy Pig'; 'Monster', and a documentary from the National Geographic on Birds.

A mobile library went for the first time to villages in the Orient on the Amazon basin. Gonzalo and Maria Teresa went with Diana, and Gladys who read the stories. Thirty five books were given. The journey there and back took four days and much was learnt. Depending on funding VDO hopes to go once every semester.

The future. We will continue with the book exchanges in the three centres because they work well and meet our objective of encouraging children to enjoy reading and to look outside their own village. We also want to make at least one expedition to the Amazon basin to continue the good work we have started. We intend to have a reading competition at Sangoliqui where staff, parents and children are very enthusiastic

CHILD SPONSORSHIP-Taitakuna Programme www.taitakuna.org

There were twenty one sponsored children. Ten of these are sponsored by the AFET group in England, eight by former volunteers, relatives and friends in England, USA and Canada. A further 23 children, siblings of those sponsored, received benefits and gifts. There was a monthly meeting as usual with 126 food parcels distributed (rice, semolina flour, pasta, flour (bean, wheat & pea), oats, lentils and sardines). The clothing shop using clothes mostly donated by tourists to the 'Happy Gringo' travel agency in Quito was run twice by local ladies from Techo Propio, but organized by VDO.

Eleven children studied in secondary school, twenty eight in primary and four in the kindergarten. The support was mainly for cultural and extra curricular activities, something that is on the increasing now in all schools. Support was given from the secondary school fund.

Health: A 5 year old girl from Techo Propio was in hospital for more than two months with osteomyelitis of her jaw. The mother of a sponsored child who helped VDO with the computer classes underwent surgery on gallstones. Both were helped with the costs of diagnostic examinations, surgery, medicines, food supplements and transport and are already recovered. The families are unbelievably grateful to the fund. Without it they would have remained untreated or the family would go into serious debt.

Building fund: A family was helped to build an adequate kitchen and to make a complete electrical installation in their house, the previous supply being dangerous. We provided paint, cleaning materials and cement for a floor in the local grocery store which was not in a good condition for the sale of food.

Christmas party 2010. There were two Christmas celebration one small one for the Porvenir Group and the other in Techo Propio. The immediate families of the sponsored children came, all were given a snack and the children a small Christmas gift. The sponsored children were given the gifts sent by their sponsors

The children, parents and ourselves are really grateful to all our supporters.

CONCLUSION

VDO-AFET plan to continue our support to these communities. If you feel you can help us in any way, by making a donation, big or small, by sponsoring a particular activity eg a month's broadband connection, purchase of a computer or library books, sponsorship of a child, or a contribution to the health fund, please do get in touch with one of us (adriennefinch@btinternet.com, or via either web site (www.afetuk.org). We do not have capital and depend on raising sufficient money each year to cover our costs.