



June / 2009
 Volume 1

Ecuador in depth

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Our Philosophy:

Ecuador Volunteer seeks to develop programs to improve the quality of life of those people who need it most. Our aim is to promote development in Ecuador in the areas of education, environment, health and social needs. We believe that if we all work together, our country and the world can and will be a better place.

You are important to help Ecuador grow. We want to create a bridge between different projects, between the people and you. It is the support of volunteers which keeps these programs alive. Please help us help others. You can make a difference, here and now!

The Indigenous Peoples of Ecuador

Ecuador Volunteer Foundation (593-2) 2226544

Indigenous peoples, which define themselves as nationalities with ancestral roots, are part of the Ecuadorian State. The Indigenous population represents about 30% of the national total. The biggest Indigenous group speaks Quichua, but there are at least ten Indigenous languages in Ecuador.

The Constituent Assembly approved on July 24, 2008, that the Indigenous languages Quichua and Shuar will be included in Ecuador's new Constitution as "official languages of intercultural relation", together with Spanish, the official language. Recognizing Quichua and Shuar as official languages means, among other things, that official documents will have to be presented in these languages.

In spite of this recent recognition, Ecuador's Indigenous peoples are still among those social groups most affected by social inequality, poverty and exclusion, in spite of their unquestionable political influence, their access to various municipals and local

governments and their high degree of mobilization through a variety of organizations such as the CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador).

Almost 70% of Indigenous Ecuadorians suffer from poverty, 40% from extreme poverty- they are the poorest segment of society. They have the lowest share of basic education registration as well as completion. The difference in illiteracy between men and women is the biggest among Indigenous Ecuadorians, as well as the prevalence of violence against women. Indigenous also have the highest risk of getting infected with HIV, and the lowest share of access to clean drinking water. The Amazonian region, where almost all inhabitants are Indigenous, has the highest share of poverty of the whole country (40%).

Those Indigenous who live in urban areas are usually poor, underprivileged and have lost most of their traditions. There are, however, still numerous Indigenous communities throughout the country who try to preserve their original way of life.

Sources and links:

- Article in "Los Tiempos" about the new Constitution (in Spanish)
- System of Indicators of Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador-SIDENPE (in Spanish)
- Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar (Spanish)
- II INFORME NACIONAL DE LOS OBJETIVOS DE DESARROLLO DEL MILENIO - ECUADOR 2007
- Report on Indigenous Languages in Ecuador (Spanish)
- Website CONAIE:

Chachi: A Nationality fighting for its Territory

By Nieve Solórzano Zambrano
Legal Team INREDH (Regional Ombudsman Foundation for Human Rights)



"The children need your help, You can contribute to change their lives"

The Chachi community of San Salvador is located three hours by canoe away from the Pueblo Nuevo sector, entering the Rio Sucio. As it is far away from urban zones, it does not have elementary basic services or means of transportation for a fast communication with other populated sectors. However, these circumstances have inspired the community to make efforts to achieve alternative ways of survival and communication.

Structurally, the Chachi have as their leading authority something like a governor, called UÑI. His functions are to watch over the territory, culture, education, and health, and to sanction violations or immoralities. Traditionally, the Chachi live from fishing, hunting, and fruit harvest. They grow cacao, plantain, yucca, corn, rice, etc.

Today, the Mache-Chindul Reserve is an invasion zone for settlers from other provinces. These are citizens that reclaim land in lots for a living so as to use them for agriculture and livestock, or also to make use of the wood reserves and cut down the forest, which has caused the loss of a great amount of native woods to Esmeraldas province. This is also why the territory has been fragmented into immense hectares, which in turn affects collective rights, the tranquility of the Chachi inhabitants, and the authenticity of future generations.

The pressure exercised by timber companies in the sphere of the reserve, as well as the emerging colonization fronts, are not only a threat to biological resources, but also to the preservation of Mache-Chindul's natural resources. One of the main effects of deforestation is the loss of water sources, given that water production is one of the environmental services the forest provides, "through hydrological regulation as well as production of rainfalls by evapotranspiration". With the loss of woods, biodiversity gets lost. That is, the variety of species of animals and plants disappears in the deforested areas, which destabilizes the ecosystems. Without forest cover, the soil is exposed to rainfall, sun and wind, and loses its fertility (chalk, potassium, magnesium, nitrogen). Adding scarcity of water sources, the land becomes inclined in desertification processes.

Deforestation deteriorates the living conditions of the local population. While they have to assimilate the environmental costs of forest destruction, the wood dealers achieve the profits. The inhabitants no longer have access to and benefit from the forest's resources: harvest of food and medical products, water sources and fertile land. This leads to the neglect of traditional culture, which means the abolishment of autonomous ways of survival.

To some inhabitants, selling wood is the only "business" that provides them with money, but they are at the mercy of the prices imposed by middlemen and wood dealers. The supposed profitability of wood sale turns out poor for farmers. They are hardly able to cover minimal aspects of survival. On the other hand, these populations are generally characterized by a precarious organizational level. They have no local or regional organizations. If we add the lack of official local environmental institutions, we may understand their vulnerability to interventions and external pressure.



"To learn about a new Culture is to find a new live "

The renting of land to indigenous communities, in spite of the serious socio-environmental impacts they are suffering from, has facilitated the extraction of woods in these territories to timber-men. These impacts include the loss of forest, vibrations of machines, new settler neighbors and diseases, and the dismantling of their economies.

In this process of occupation and purchase of forest and land, a multitude of violations are committed against local inhabitants, such as: on top of paying them laughable prices for the trees, settlers unilaterally create farmer associations, they initiate settler movements (for example the one that resulted in the precincts of Hoja Blancas, in the Mailimpia parish of Esmeraldas, which they control), they divide and bring into conflict the inhabitants, make them offers (building of infrastructure, roads, schools) and intimidate them.

Legal Advocacy of Inredh to Protect the Chachi Territory

The San Salvador community, through their president José Eberto Tapuyo, has contacted INREDH (Fundación Regional de Asesoría en Derechos Humanos) to seek their help for advocacy in the case of prohibited tree felling a group of settlers in Santo Domingo was involved in. It has to be stressed that the eight citizens accused in this process are recidivist in entering illegally the Chachi territory inside the Mache-Chindu reserve.

The detention of the invader citizens was an important step for the San Salvador Chachi community, as the issue has been denounced by the community for several years (details see full text in Spanish, link below). However, local and provincial authorities had never taken action to mitigate the effects of these invasions. It seems that with this new precedent, the local authorities are making joint efforts with the Chachi communities to protect the ecological reserve from the predatory purposes of land and wood dealers.

Source:
INREDH - ALAI NET

Our Organization

Ecuador Volunteer Foundation is a non-profit organization that offers volunteer work opportunities abroad in social, environmental, educational and community areas around Ecuador. It is legally recognized by the Government of Ecuador, which was constituted through the ministerial agreement No.0350 on October 10, 2005. Currently it is the only organization authorized to select and supply volunteers to third party organizations providing their services in social, community, educational, healthcare and ecological projects/programs throughout Ecuador.

Due to the socioeconomic needs from which much of the Ecuadorian population suffers (as in other Latin American countries, too), many different areas are in need of governmental and private help in order to get by. For this reason, ECUADOR VOLUNTEER, through the volunteer work of young people as well as adults around the world, collaborates with different organizations to carry out projects that promote development in the developing sectors.

Currently, we are collaborating with more than 30 projects throughout Ecuador. More than 50 volunteers are helping us to accomplish this important task.



Ecuador Volunteer offers you opportunities to help Indigenous communities in their struggle for survival all over Ecuador

FREE PROJECTS

Reconstruction of Schools who have suffered extensive damage in the Amazon rainforest in the Shuar sector around the jungle, to benefit poor communities with tiny populations.

LOW COST PROJECTS

Amazonian Rainforest Community Santa Ana: This community generates its income with its traditional economy: fishing, agriculture, hunting, horticulture, combined with handicrafts, community tourism, conservation and reforestation.

Chinimp Tuna Project in the Amazonian Jungle: In this project the volunteers can work with the women artisans and their families and involve in other community activities.

Cheese Production Project "Pangora": The indigenous community of Cajas needs expertise to improve the production of the milk products that generate their income.

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"Right before your eyes is the chance to change the lives of many. Thanks for being a part of Ecuador Volunteer"



"Please help to Jefferson and his family in their constant struggle for survival, his life depends exclusively of your donations."

MISSION: To help to develop programs for the well-being of mankind and nature and to improve the quality of life of those people who need it most.

VISION: We want to create a network between volunteers from all over the world who are willing to help us to make Ecuador a better place, and between projects covering different areas, working on the country's development. Our goal is to be the biggest volunteer service organization in Ecuador.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To establish a system of selection of both national and international volunteers to help private and governmental organizations realize social, cultural, educational, scientific and developmental activities that result in the social improvement of Ecuador and of any other country that may need our help.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- Generate cooperation
- Foster fundraising
- Recruit and place talent
- Generate understanding and ability for a common good
- Strengthen the management of civil society organizations or municipalities
- Instill a culture of social responsibility in people

The main focus of our programs is to offer a cultural exchange experience to each volunteer in all of the projects, designed to help and work together with the local people.

Causes in need

Jefferson Gualacata Inlago- a poor, disabled Boy's Perspectives in Ecuador

Jefferson is a 12 years old boy. He lives with his brother Kevin (4), his mum Jeanette (30) and his dad Cesar (34) in a very tiny indigenous community called Eugenio Espejo de Cajas, which is situated in the Andean Sierra of Imbabura province. Jefferson is a lovely boy- he loves to watch his brother play and dance, and each time his father comes home after work, he cries for joy. But Jefferson cannot express his feelings in any other way. He can't speak, he can't walk, nor see further than 2 meters, and he has been tied to an old wheelchair his entire life because his muscles cannot support his body, nor control his movements. His mum has to give him attention 24 hours, to change his diapers, feed and wash him and take care that he does not hurt himself with some sudden movement. Without therapies, there is no hope that this will ever change.

What happened? Jeanette can't help crying when she tells us Jefferson's sad story. When he was only 15 days old, his family took him to the next hospital in Cayambe for vaccinations. The bus drove so fast that when the doors opened, baby Jefferson fell on the sidewalk of the street and hit his head very hard. Ever since then, Jefferson has been disabled. His body grew normally, but his head didn't (hydrocephaly); He has acute convulsions. When he was 3 months old, the doctors implanted him a valve which goes from his head to his navel and which has to be replaced every 5 years. One valve costs 2500 dollars. Cesar hardly earns 350 dollars per month in his job at the provincial administration, and Jeanette cannot work as she has to take care after Jefferson and his brother.

During the years, the family has suffered immensely. Again and again, their hopes for recovery have been deceived; they had to sell almost all their belongings, their chicken and cows that provided their food, to pay all the surgeries, the medicine, rehabilitation and daily transport to Quito during years for their beloved son. Yet they have not been able to pay the interests of the loan they had to take out for the last valve two years ago. But Jefferson is growing, and he desperately needs a new wheelchair. Without therapy, he will never learn to speak or control his movements and his digestion better, and soon he will be too old. But rehabilitation centers are far away in the capital Quito, and it takes 2 persons to carry Jefferson around. The family can't afford to pay him therapies, and transport has become too expensive. They even lack money for basic things like diapers, medicine, medical checks, clothes and food; it takes a miracle for them to pay the next valve. And without it, Jefferson will slowly and irreversibly decline more.

Please help Jefferson and his family in their constant struggle for survival, a struggle that can be avoided. You can give them hope for a better life in dignity.

- With 100 dollars, the family can buy Jefferson's food and diapers for one month.
- With 360 dollars, Jefferson can take one month of therapy in a private institution in Quito. The therapy includes a physical, language and occupational component, three weekly hours (1 hour: \$10, 1 year: \$4320)
- His valve which he needs in 3 years costs 2500 dollars.



You can make a difference, here and now. For donations, please contact Ecuador Volunteer. Let's try our best to improve Jefferson's life! Any contribution will be helpful and deeply appreciated. Thank you!

ECUADOR VOLUNTEER FOUNDATION

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Our Web!

Visit us:

www.ecuadorvolunteer.org



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DONATIONS FORMS

- **Please make your check payable to:**
 Ecuador Volunteer Foundation
 Yanez Pinzon N25-106 y Av. Colon.
 Quito - Ecuador - South America
- **Donate by Credit Card and Bank Transfer:** Request more info in admin@ecuadorvolunteer.org
- **Western Union :** Please send your donation to:
 - o **Name:** Francisco Pastor
 - o **Destination:** Quito - Ecuador

Ecuador Volunteer Foundation is a non-profit organization legally recognized by the Government of Ecuador, which was constituted through the ministerial agreement No.0350 on October 10, 2005.

The Reports about the donations will be publish in <http://www.ecuadorvolunteer.org/important/fact.html>

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Jefferson needs your help...

Cut Here and Return By Mail