Overview of Ecuador

Languages: Spanish, indigenous (Quechua, Shuar)

Under-five Mortality Rate: 23 per 1,000 live births. Ecuador ranks 86 in the world.

Infant Mortality Rate: 20 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Human Development Index (HDI) for 2012: 0.724 (ranked 89 out of 187, indicating high human development).

Maternal Mortality: 110 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Brief History of ChildFund in Ecuador

ChildFund came to Ecuador: 1984
Number of enrolled children (FY13): 28,249
Number of participants (FY13): 131,543

ChildFund works in 5 of Ecuador’s 24 provinces: Carchi, Imbabura, Pichincha, Cotopaxi and Tungurahua.

Since 1985, ChildFund Ecuador’s work to effect positive change for children in situation of deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability, youth and their families has been centered in a community-based approach, with the involvement and leadership of local partner organizations.

ChildFund has consistently promoted the establishment of strategic alliances with communities, enabling them to lead the improvement of their living conditions through work in multiple areas of intervention such as education, health, social organization and environmental care.

The lessons learned have established ChildFund as one of the most recognized organizations in child centered development in Ecuador and positioned us to establish strong, collaborative linkages with other public and private organizations.
At the core of ChildFund’s programmatic approach is the promotion and guarantee of the fundamental rights of children and youth as well as community participation in their own social development processes.

For infants (0-5 years old) and their families, we implement the Early Child Development, ECD program, which seeks to overcome the biggest obstacles to a holistic child development such as, poverty, low parents’ educational level, lack of coverage and quality services in health and nutrition, particularly in rural areas. The aim of this program is to work together with parents, caregivers and communities to ensure that infants have the nutrition, care, safety and stimulation they need to achieve their potential.

Children at school age program aims to improve live conditions of children at school age and their families. A holistic approach is implemented by working interventions at different levels of the triangle of the education community (parents, children and educational system) putting children at the center of the intervention and strengthening their role as agents of their own development.

A first component of the program is focused on complementing the educational process through the development of abilities and skills of children at community level. Active-participatory learning methodologies are conducted to empower children as the center of the educational process, this includes clubs of children to promote and raise awareness on their fundamental rights, as well as social and financial rights (Aflatoun methodologies are part of this component and are offered through training sessions covering social and financial issues such as saving skills, basic financial and business management).

A second component involves facilitating parent training on the “Family Formation Program,” which aims to improve their knowledge on child development for children 6-14 years of age, including how to support their educational needs, their social interactions, nutrition, productive use of free time, the fundamental rights of children, violence prevention and physical and intellectual development.

A third component includes contributing to classrooms materials such as learning, ludic and pedagogic resources. It also includes the development of operational plans for disaster contingency and emergencies in coordination with Local Emergency Committees with the objective of safeguard the integrity of children in vulnerable situations.

Youth Program focus its interventions on a holistic development of teenagers and young people by providing them natural spaces for community participation and personal development.

Leadership and empowerment are the main elements of the intervention with teenagers and young people through clubs and groups training them on advocacy, political participation and human
rights. This allows them to have an active role within their communities expecting to raise their community profile as active participants on public making decision spaces related to local governance, civil participation and development of community agendas.

Life-learning interventions is a second important objective by providing peer encounters through summer camps and sportive, cultural, massive events. These activities promote youth groups participation, awareness raising about sexual health and rights, violence and drugs abuse prevention. In addition life-skills training is also provided in combination with Aflateen program methodologies in order to foster proactive and responsible behaviors in youth people, towards their selves, their families and their communities.

**Families and communities** are engaged in a global development process by significantly increasing their social capital, which is evidenced on the improvement of their community participation, and their ability to articulate with local authorities and other social actors in order to respond to children needs. Self-awareness on child protection is a key element developed through the “Safety Network” which generates an integral response to prevent and react to cases of children at risk. Aiming to protect and promote children’s rights by transforming themselves and their families into guarantors and advocates for a timely protection.

This integral approach is supported by interventions aimed to build and strengthen local capacities and social capital, including a capacity building process within local partners and community leaders, who are trained on project management, resource mobilization, external relations and advocacy as well as on human rights restitution and protection, democracy and political participation. All these interventions are leading children, young people their families and community organizations towards an empowered vision of their lives and environment as the key element for sustainability and well-being.

### 2013 Program Achievements

**Infants**

ChildFund Ecuador’s work in this life stage is critically important, given that early childhood is the most important phase in human growth and development and early experiences determine health, education and economic participation for the rest of life.

In FY13, 3,825 parents successfully completed a nine-month ECD training program, improving their knowledge on early stimulation, nutrition, health, risk prevention and child protection. This effort benefited 7,349 children, with 88% of them responding with adequate and age appropriate development of motor, language, nutrition and socialization skills.
Other efforts included:
(1) raising awareness among community members about available public services and how to access them; and
(2) conducting community health campaigns and providing vaccinations and nutrition monitoring for children and their families, benefiting 4,187 infants across Ecuador.

Children

In FY13, ChildFund supported the improvement of active-participatory learning methodologies and Aflatoun social and financial education, and conducting health campaigns, benefiting 30,753 school children across Ecuador.

Further, ChildFund successfully trained 3,170 parents on the “Family Formation Program,” improving their knowledge of child development for children 6 to 14 years old; how to respond to and support their educational, emotional, social, and nutritional needs; how to promote their physical and intellectual development and productive use of free time; and how to protect them from violence and abuse and ensure their well-being.

Moreover, 2,670 children participated in summer vacation camps, aimed at improving their self-esteem, values, leadership skills through recreation, arts and cultural activities and preventing exploitative child labor, drug use and reducing the risk of violence.

Youth

In FY13 5,226 young people participated in summer camps and sports, cultural, and enrichment activities aimed at promoting group participation, and raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health and rights, and violence and drug abuse prevention.

A total of 69 youth groups, reaching 896 teenagers and young people strengthened their leadership and life learning skills, through education in topics covering values, sexual and reproductive health, civic engagement, Aflateen (social and financial education)

Further, 198 teens and young leaders were identified and trained in advocacy and became active participants in public, decision making spaces, increasing their civic engagement in local governance and development of community agendas.
2013 Program Achievements (continued)

Civil Society

In FY13, 188 local committees from 524 communities representing 19,104 participants engaged in efforts with the National Child Protection System, to ensure and guarantee the protection of children’s rights within their communities, through ChildFund safety networks.

In addition, 46 local associations were included in six Community Federation capacity building efforts, to strengthen organizational capacities through leadership, governance, advocacy and project cycle management training.

Challenges

While the 2013 UNDP Annual Report 2013 states that Ecuador is one of the four countries with the most significant improvement in the human development index (HDI 2012), social and economic inequality persists, affecting mostly indigenous and native populations living in rural areas. There are 5.5 million boys; girls and adolescents in Ecuador. 3.3 million of them live in poverty, with 1.6 million facing extreme poverty.

The National government states that one of the main challenges in social development is a change in the inequities in living conditions of most excluded populations. In addition, child malnutrition affects 53% of children in some areas, causing severe deficiencies in language, interaction skills and even preventable disabilities in children.

Ecuador’s government is also looking at bridging the gap in education for children through a robust intercultural educational system that is recognized for its quality and ensures access and retention. Local statistics indicate that 390,000 children and adolescents (children ages 5 to 17) do not attend school mainly because of child labor (16.6%), household chores (13.5% of which 67.7% are girls), while 37% of those attending school in rural areas fail to complete secondary education. ChildFund seeks to generate synergistic responses starting with children and their families and communities, to overcome these barriers and misconceptions around education.

Emerging challenges related to exclusion and vulnerability affect the youth population in Ecuador (approximately 1.8 million youth). For example, 40% of deaths among young people are associated with preventable causes (traffic accidents, violence and suicide); early pregnancy among adolescents has increased from 7% to 10% in girls ages 12 to 17. ChildFund’s approach for youth includes sexual and reproductive health workshops, personal skills training in self-esteem enhancement and coping skills, and social participation and life skills training. Together, these activities provide a holistic approach, enabling youth to become young adults and leaders who bring lasting and positive change in their communities.

ChildFund’s commitment is to continue strengthening capacities of communities, empowering them to develop and promote a community approach towards autonomous and sustainable interventions to respond to the challenges children, adolescents and their families are facing.
Why Sponsorship is Important

The best opportunity life has given me

My name is Belen and I am 16 years old. It makes me feel very good to know that somewhere in the world there is someone who cares about me and is interested in knowing how things are going in my life.

We are always in constant communication through the letters I send or receive from my sponsor. I love to receive letters from my sponsor. He lives in the US and despite the fact that we do not speak the same language, thanks to ChildFund, the letters are translated, which makes our communication easier.

ChildFund has given me the chance to participate in programs such as the Youth Communicators group which has allowed me to grow as a human being through sharing experiences with other youth my age and to learn different things such as producing TV and radio programs and write about youth topics in a local newspaper.

I also participated in the summer camps in different communities which gave me enriching life lessons because I had the opportunity to share time with young people like me and we learned new things that help us develop our abilities. Positive things like these have helped me to progress in my life.

Thanks to my participation in ChildFund’s projects, I have learned to communicate better with my sponsor, family and friends and I have learned about values such as respect, honesty, solidarity, punctuality, responsibility and others. I have learned to go for and build dreams, to strive for them and look towards the future.”