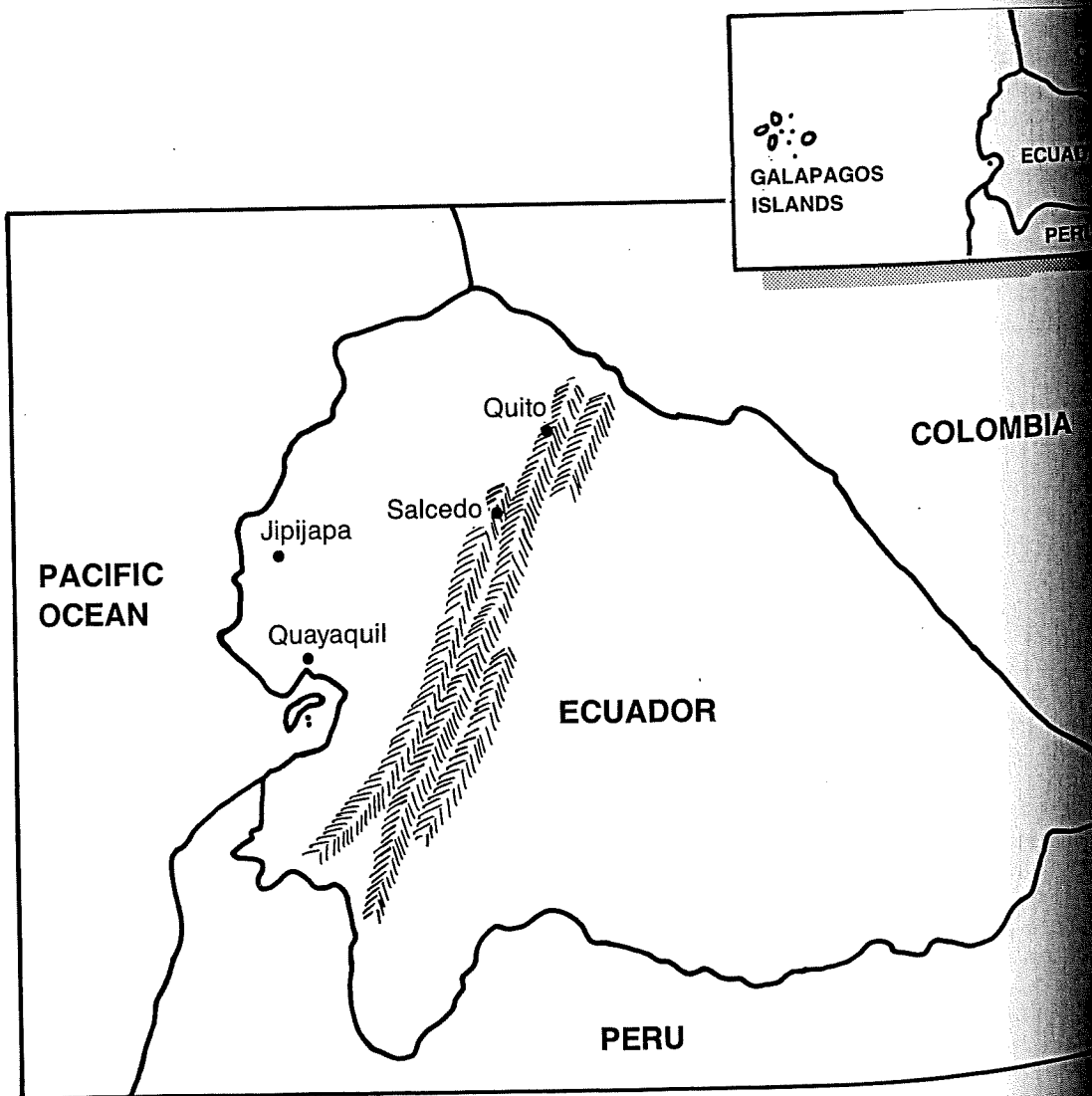


Introducing Ecuador





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Children are treasured in Ecuador as representatives of hope and promise. At the same time they are a heartbreaking reminder of the many problems that Ecuador's people must solve before the potential of these children can be realized. The problems of children are especially urgent here where 42 percent of the population is under 15 years old.

Nearly half of the children under five years of age suffer from malnutrition—evidence of the drastic reduction in fertile land over the last decade and the accompanying increase in food prices. Other problems are vividly portrayed on the faces and bodies of the children who are the most vulnerable. The adults in Ecuador are fully aware of the need to improve the quality of life and provide a future for their children.

History

The high mountains and volcanoes of the Andes, the jungles of the Amazon and the unique Galapagos Islands are all part of Ecuador. Located in the northwestern part of South America, Ecuador is surrounded by Colombia to the north, Peru to the east and south and the Pacific Ocean to the west. It is crossed by the equator from which it takes its name.

Ecuador has a long and proud history. The area, originally inhabited 10,000 years ago, has been the home to some of the oldest cultures in America including the Valdiva and Chorrera who thrived here centuries before the Mayas, Aztecs and the Incas were on the continent. These tribes and cultural groups lived in isolation from each other until the mid-sixteenth century, when several of the Indian nations joined together to form the Kingdom of Quito, considered the root of modern Ecuador. Although Quito was later conquered by the Incas, the two kingdoms became allied and prospered as the Great Inca Empire.

In 1620, the Spaniards began a period of



Jore Floden



dominance which lasted 200 years. In 1822, the wars of independence that began in 1809 culminated in the defeat of Spanish forces in the Battle of Pichincha. After the defeat of Spain, the territories which are now Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador joined together to form the Republic of Gran Colombia. Eight years later, Ecuador left the union and declared the State of Ecuador a sovereign nation.

Today, a democratic constitution, passed by referendum in 1978 is the law of the land in Ecuador. An elected president serves a single, four-year term. The President works with the National Congress, a 71-member parliament, and the Supreme Court of Justice, the judicial arm of government. Free association and free enterprise are the basic principles of political and economic life in Ecuador. Education in this overwhelmingly Catholic country is nondenominational and free at all levels.

Costa, along the climate. The farm of export goods is cane sugar, rice, The Sierra, or high the two mountain center of more estates that production. The Oriente, rest of the country source of petroleumian climate, a population. The C Darwin began to is Ecuador's four islands are of special tourists because of the world thrive.

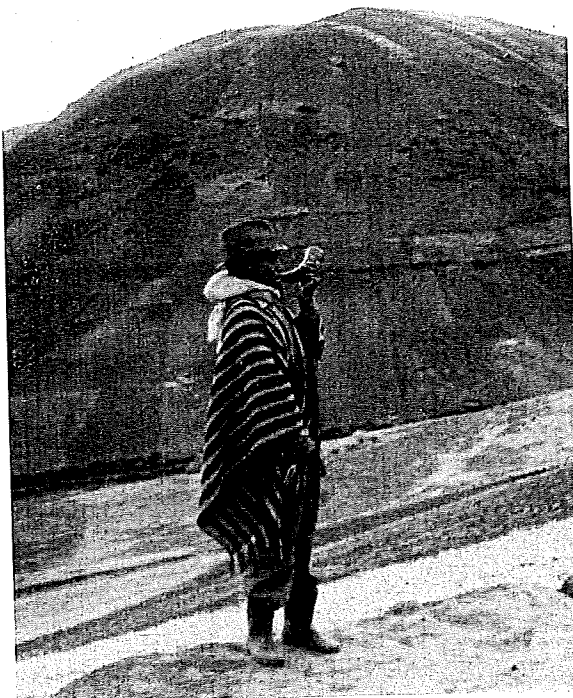
People of Ecuador

Most of Ecuador's nearly nine million people are of Indian or mixed Indian and white (Mestizo) origin. Although the official language is Spanish, Quichua, an ancient Indian language, is still spoken in the more remote parts of the country.

Just over half of Ecuador's people live in the cities. One million people live in its capitol, Quito, a slow-paced, conservative city in the mountains of the Sierra region. Almost one and a half million people live in Quayaquil, the main port and financial center. Many Ecuadorans earn their living as farmers, hunters, and fishermen although the steady movement from rural to urban centers continues to increase.

Geography

The majestic Andes Mountains cross Ecuador from north to south. These mountains create three distinct regions: the Costa, Sierra and Oriente regions. The



Save the Children Photo





Costa, along the Pacific Coast, has a hot, moist climate. The farmers of this region produce a variety of export goods including bananas, coffee, cocoa, cane sugar, rice, fruit and wood from this fertile soil. The Sierra, or highlands region, is tucked between the two mountain ranges of the Andes. Sierra is the center of more traditional "haciendas" or feudal estates that produce goods for internal consumption. The Oriente, which was long isolated from the rest of the country, is now an important area as a source of petroleum. Oriente has a tropical, Amazonian climate, a wide variety of fauna and a sparse population. The Galapagos Islands, where Charles Darwin began to develop his theories of evolution, is Ecuador's fourth region. These thirteen unique islands are of special interest to both scientists and tourists because animal species extinct in other parts of the world thrive here.

Economy

The economy of Ecuador has always depended on the export of traditional agricultural goods. In the nineteenth century, export goods were cacao, tobacco, wood and rubber; after World War I, coffee, rice and sugar cane were the main exports; in the 1950's the "banana boom" took hold and began to become the major focus of market exports. In the 1970's, bananas were replaced by oil as the primary export when oil reserves were discovered in the Oriente.

The trend toward the export of raw materials continues today: In 1983, oil, bananas, cocoa and coffee accounted for 90 percent of Ecuador's exports. The development of the seafood sector is expected to be a promising market in the future.

The discovery of oil has had a tremendous impact on the social and economic climate as the economy has grown at an unprecedented level. This growth is reflected in the per capita gross national product



Save the Children Photo



which rose from \$1,190 in 1972 to \$1,430 in 1983. This growth rate of over 8 percent is the highest Ecuador has ever experienced. As a result, there have been overall improvements in the quality of life in Ecuador: literacy rates have risen as more schools are available and better health care has reduced the infant mortality rate as life expectancy rises. The uneven distribution of these improvements and the services which made them possible is one of Ecuador's greatest problems.

Ecuador Today

While the oil boom has brought major improvements to the quality of life of many of Ecuador's people, there are significant portions of the population who have not been part of the new prosperity. These people, who did not benefit from the oil boom, are the same ones who have been most affected by the world economic crisis of the eighties. These groups are generally located in remote, rural areas and marginal ghettos around the major cities. Health services, water and sanitation systems, schools, roads, and other facilities are still concentrated in the privileged urban centers.

Although unemployment does not seem to be a major problem, a recent study estimated that over half the people who are working are underemployed and that 40 percent of Ecuadoran households do not generate an adequate income. Because of the need to supplement inadequate income, many children are forced to drop out of school in order to help support their families by carrying water, polishing shoes, or selling newspapers.

Children become easy prey to intestinal infections and anemia in areas where safe drinking water and sanitation systems are unavailable. Health clinics and water systems, in addition to parks and roads, are concentrated in the privileged urban sectors.

An environmental disaster may be looming for



Save the Children Photo

Ecuador and has decreased. A lack of disaster relief must be provided. The Ecuadorian government must be held under

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Save the Children. The people of Ecuador in Jipijana. The agreement of the two areas is discussed in the design.

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Ecuador. The amount of land being used to plant and harvest vegetables and cereals is steadily decreasing due to erosion, soil depletion, and the lack of adequate irrigation. By 1980, after several disastrous years in the 70's, the percentage of fertile land was reduced by half. As a result these foodstuffs must be imported, making them more expensive for the Ecuadoran people. It is because of this scarcity of food, that nearly half of the children here who are under five years of age are malnourished.

Save the Children in Ecuador

Save the Children has been working to help the people of Ecuador in Salcedo in the Sierra region and in Jipijapa in the coastal region. Improved organization of peasant groups (campesinos) has been agreed upon as the first order of business in these two areas. The campesinos provide a forum for discussion of different problems facing the community, with the purpose of defining needs and designing projects to meet those needs.

The projects devised by the campesinos and Save the Children constitute a multipronged attack on three main problem areas; low food production, disease and malnutrition, and poor educational facilities. In an effort to increase the yield from the land, special attention is being paid to nurturing the potato, wheat, and broad bean crop in Salcedo and the corn, green bean, and peanut crop in Jipijapa. Storehouses are also being built to hold the surplus food grown through the improved methods learned by the farmers in this Save the Children program.

The construction of drinking water systems will precipitate a major improvement in the health of the Ecuadoran people, particularly the children who are very susceptible to waterborne diseases. Vaccination campaigns, health education courses, and com-



Save the Children Photo

munity and family gardens have also been enlisted as methods which are intended to help battle sickness in these communities.

The Save the Children Training Center at Salcedo is the site for courses in community structure and leadership. Teaching people how to organize so that they can pool their energy to get a major project off the ground is the key to helping a group of people develop their own potential.

This is only the beginning for Save the Children in Ecuador. The combination of the land's physical resources, such as fisheries and oil mines, and the essential human resource that the willing and hopeful Ecuadoran people represent, can surely tip the balance in their favor.