

# A YEAR IN ECUADOR

## SUMMARY REPORT 2011

Plan is helping communities prepare and cope with natural disasters



### About Ecuador

Ecuador has four regions – Andean highlands, Amazon rainforest, coastal plains, and the Galapagos Islands – and a variety of peoples, including 11 indigenous ethnic groups.

Sixty-one percent of people live in poverty.

Plan works with over 1,000 communities, in partnership with the government, NGOs, local leaders, and community members.

### Problems affecting the children in Ecuador

- Children are vulnerable to preventable diseases.
- Rising rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Poor education quality.
- Children's rights are not widely recognised.
- Ecuador is vulnerable to natural disasters.



Children playing with educational toys.

## PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN ECUADOR

### Improving health, nutrition and sanitation, and helping increase families incomes

- Helping communities promote good health and prevent disease
- Providing clean water and sanitation facilities
- Enabling families to get small loans to develop new ways of making a living

### Ensuring children grow up well educated, in a safe and positive environment

- Increasing the completion of basic education
- Providing nursery education and training for teachers
- Encouraging children to value and express their cultural identity

### Having children's voices heard and take part in decision making

- Developing children's leadership and communication skills
- Strengthening children's organisations

### Promoting children's rights and protecting them from abuse

- Raising awareness of and preventing sexual abuse, and supporting those affected
- Preventing gender violence in schools
- Supporting children with disabilities

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in Ecuador.

To learn more about Plan's work in Ecuador visit:

[www.plan.org.au/ourwork/southernamerica/ecuador](http://www.plan.org.au/ourwork/southernamerica/ecuador)



Children's rights group meet to discuss the biggest challenges facing the village.

## CASE STUDY: PROJECT 'UNITY IS STRENGTH'

The winter of 2009 was not an easy one in Manabi province, on the west coast of Ecuador.

Many areas suffered severe flooding, and in Tosagua Canton, hundreds of hectares of maize and rice were spoiled when the El Bolsillero river burst its banks and swept away everything in its path. Angelita, who is from the village of El Juncal, in Tosagua Canton, remembers: "The flooding was strong and lasted until May."

Although flooding happens regularly, families will be less vulnerable in the future, thanks to a Plan project that gets young people involved in disaster risk reduction. Elva, a member of El Juncal's youth group 'Unity is Strength', says: "We no longer have fear, we know we can deal with flooding, and we can do everything possible to reduce the problems that it brings."

Disaster risk reduction is a distinctive part of Plan's work, and it's a relatively new concept in Ecuador. We help communities to work together to identify the risks they face, and plan how to act in an emergency. El Juncal is one of 25 communities involved in this project, which is benefitting 12,000 people.

### Making a plan

Thanks to Plan's work on youth participation, each community already had a youth group. El Juncal has 'Unity is Strength', a youth group which is 22 strong. As part of their disaster risk reduction work, the group

researched the village's history, analysed the risks it faces, and identified its most vulnerable areas. They also talked about how disasters affect them emotionally.

The group produced a map showing vulnerable areas, and safe places to go when flooding occurred, such as health centres and schools. The map highlights areas of severe deforestation, where the community is planting seedlings to control erosion. When mature, trees will also act as a break for floodwaters. They also developed an action plan. This ensured that people received training in first aid. It also urged all families to store tinned food and bottles of water in case severe flooding cuts them off.

### Getting adults involved

The group also demanded that adults and institutions fulfil their responsibilities. Getting state institutions involved is key to the project's success. These include the National Risk Management Secretariat, the fire department, the Red Cross, and municipal authorities.

Young people asked these institutions to train them on risk reduction. For example, from the fire department: "We learned about preventing fire, for example by making sure that cooking-gas is properly switched off when not in use," says Yoana, a youth group member. Adults received the same training. As most houses are made of cane and wood, these skills are important.

### A more confident future

Teenagers feel pride in their village, and a greater sense of belonging. Many have gained confidence in making their views heard. "Before, my son was very quiet, and embarrassed about expressing himself, especially in public," says Cecilia, a mother. All the communities involved in the project are now better prepared to cope with disasters. One morning, Angelita woke up and saw that the river had overflowed its banks, flooding the village. In the past, she would have been terrified, but now she knew it was important to stay calm, and was confident about leaving her home to seek safety.

"Thanks to Plan," she says, "I have learned what to do in an emergency."

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons

## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Provided financial education for 3,792 co-operative members and 15,000 young people, and supported 207 savings and loans groups
- Successfully lobbied for Ecuador's new constitution to include universal access to free education, and protection for children's rights
- 96 community leaders are implementing our Protect Me From Sexual Abuse campaign, raising awareness among 9,000 people in 39 communities
- 1,003 child journalists produced and broadcasted radio programmes on the theme of children's and young people's rights



Girls identifying risk areas at a mock-up of their community.

**"We no longer have fear, we know we can deal with flooding" Angelita**