

A co-operatively run NGO driven by the enthusiasm of its staff and volunteers to promote sustainable development in marginalized communities throughout Ecuador and to promote Cultural Exchange for mutual benefit in our increasingly globalized world

Stay up to date with all the news at Yanapuma!

A bimonthly newsletter

Issue No. 16: March-April 2010

Introduction

Welcome to our March/April newsletter, in which you will find information and recent news about both the foundation and the Spanish school.

The Spanish school stayed very busy through March, easily beating our target of averaging 20 students per week. April and May are traditionally low months, and true to form, we have seen a reduction in numbers, although bookings remain strong for the summer and we look forward to being extra busy over this period.

In March we launched a new website specifically aimed at the online Spanish class market (see page 3) which we are now in the process of promoting.

Our team in the foundation has been exceptionally busy over the past two months on our two principal projects in the community of Bua. The workload is challenging our internal capacity, but overall the experience is providing us with a valuable education in the management of projects that we will be able to carry forward to subsequent work that we undertake. We have also learned a lot more about the challenges of working with the Tsa'chila culture.

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April 10 was the last day to file our annual return for the organization, which we succeeded in filing in time. A corrected financial statement for 2009 will be uploaded to our website as soon as it is approved.

During April we have also been busy organizing a change-over in accounting. We have contracted the services of an external accounting firm, e-Valora, who will take charge of our accounts as from May. We hope that this move, although it involves extra cost to Yanapuma, will provide us with a reliable and professional service that will help us grow in the coming years.



A free salsa class for students each week

At Yanapuma Spanish school we offer many extra activities to our students. Visiting Quito is not just about learning Spanish!

Quito is a vibrant capital city that combines the historic with the modern, offering the best of both worlds with plenty to keep the visitor occupied.



Ice cream!



Students visit the historic center of Quito at night

Donations

Spanish student **Corliss Jacobs** donated \$200 to the work of the foundation on completing her classes with us in Quito. We will either use this money as an incentive for the women of Estero de Plátano who are trying to develop a small business of offering food to visiting tourists – to buy them a few basic necessities such as silverware, plates and plastic chairs to get their business off the ground. Or we may combine it with other funds to buy desks or books for the local school.

Student **Elise Marcoux** donated \$1000 to the work of the foundation after spending two weeks studying with her teacher as she explored the Pacific coast of Ecuador from Esmeraldas to Manabí. This donation will go towards the ongoing work in Bua where we are making progress in the improvement of cacao harvest and quality. *(continued right . . .)*

. . . These tangible benefits are beginning to pique the interest of an increasing number of local farmers and we are training young Tsa'chila to be able to train these other farmers in the new techniques that they have mastered, as well as to begin developing post-harvest treatments to increase the value that the Tsa'chila receive for their crop.

Following the death from cancer of **Lynn Kirby**, wife of one of the trustees of Yanapuma Scotland a fund was started for a small memorial project in her name. Family members have raised \$1900 that will provide books for a library in the Viña del Mar school in Estero de Plátano. We are working with the teachers to define their needs.

Foundation News . . .

At the start of April a new website was launched for Yanapuma Scotland – www.yanapuma.org.uk. This is a simple site primarily for the UK audience to begin to promote the aims of Yanapuma Scotland. These are principally to serve as a conduit for resources for the work of Yanapuma in Ecuador as well as to develop Cultural Exchange opportunities for young people through volunteering and through linking schools and communities with projects in Ecuador.

Bua

The projects team has been incredibly busy, swamped is a more accurate term, with the projects sponsored by the Interamerican Foundation (IAF) and the UNDP. Each forms a complementary aspect of our long-term commitment to the community of Bua.

A highlight of the work has been theater workshops by group “Pimangu” which means “Breath of Air” in Tsa’fiki, aim at provoking reflection on social and cultural processes among the Tsa’chila as part of Yanapuma’s commitment to helping the community to bring about positive changes that will allow them to move forward.

Problems have arisen in the community of Bua through the UNDP project which we are working to resolve. This has manifested itself through a lack of participation by the community. But digging beneath the surface reveals the depth of difference between the Tsa’chila culture and our own expectations. It seems that introduction of the UNDP project has served to complicate our work.

The Tsa’chila are very prone to think individualistically, to develop rivalries and jealousies, and to fall into a state in which they lack motivation or fail to realistically evaluate the costs and benefits related to their actions. These are all factors which have contributed to their lack of development over recent years and to the inability of external organizations to work collaboratively with them.

What we have realized is that the IAF project that we are engaged in is primarily focused on the social aspects of their development, which is exactly what we need to be attending to. However the UNDP project is more focused towards concrete outcomes, which we now realize was a little premature for us to be engaging in with the Tsa’chila who need a great deal more work on the sociocultural side in order to develop the necessary abilities to be able to move forward on their own account.

But these are the challenges of the work that we have set ourselves and we continue with patience seeking ways to address these issues.



Volunteers on a reforestation Project in Bua



A cultural day at Shinopi Bolon cultural center in Bua

Other Bua Project News

Some minor modifications were carried out to the urine-faeces separating inserts to the ecological toilets at the school. After evaluation with the teachers of their use and observations made on site a modified design was produced to resolve these issues. We also installed a larger outflow pipe from the urine tank and re-routed it to where the new vegetable plot and orchard for the school will be sited.

Development of this vegetable plot in the Abraham Calazacón School got under way in April and we look forward to seeing the first production of vegetables!

Meeting in Puca Chicta/Kamak Maki

On 9 March Azalia and Andy travelled to Kamka Maki in the Amazon region to talk with project leader Alonso Andi about future collaboration with the project at Kamak Maki. They will be working with the Ministry of Tourism to develop their ethnographic museum, but it remains to be seen exactly what form the Ministry’s help will take. The greatest current need expressed by Alonso was for help in accounting and book-keeping, a need that we will respond to in May once we have finished working on our own accounting system.

Our meeting in Puca Chicta was primarily to find out the truth about rumors that we had heard that they had signed a deal with a gold-mining company to mine on their land. Worried about what this implied for the health of the community and their environment we met with a large section of the community at the end of a “minga” at which they were clearing the land around the local school.

Despite having heard their assurances that they do not intend to work with the gold miners, we are not sure that we have got to the bottom of the issue. Documents that they were supposed to have sent us to clarify the position still have not come into our possession.

Estero de Plátano . . .

Intern Emiliano has continued to work with the “caja solidaria” to manage the funds for the students who are receiving scholarships from Yanapuma. Here he is at a meeting with the community bank to organize disbursement of the funds to the pupils.

Yanapuma is sponsoring 10 students in 2010 through donations from various sources.





Students enjoy a jungle hike on a Study and Travel program

School News . . .

New website launched!

On 5 April we launched www.spanishonlineclass.com, a website especially designed to reach out to those looking for online classes. We had realized that the great majority of our online students have either taken classes with us here in Quito, or plan to in the future. Thus we figured that we are missing a huge potential slice of the market, students who will probably never come to Quito to study with us but who want to take online classes. Thus this new site focuses on online Spanish courses with the aim of achieving a higher web presence for this specific area of study.

Student Group:

In March a group of students arrived from Eastern Illinois University. They spent a hectic week taking Spanish classes as well as visiting many sights in and around Quito, including the cloud forest in Mindo, Otavalo market, the Museum at the Mitad del Mundo, the Teleferico, and museums in Quito. The Spanish course was taken for credit.

Preparing our Teachers:

In March and April two new documents were produced for the teachers. The first is a manual for new teachers that introduces them to the organization in all its facets. We have found that often new teachers do not fully understand what Yanapuma does or stands for, which makes it harder for them to communicate about this to the students, many of whom are initially attracted by the social and ecological mission of the foundation. Thus we hope to improve their understanding and involvement in the mission and work of the organization to better be able to discuss this with their students.

The second document, with similar aims, is a short newsletter in Spanish for the teachers and other staff that relates recent events and new developments in the organization, both the school and the foundation.



Students and volunteers enjoy a cool swim in an Amazon river

Staff, Students, Interns & More . . .

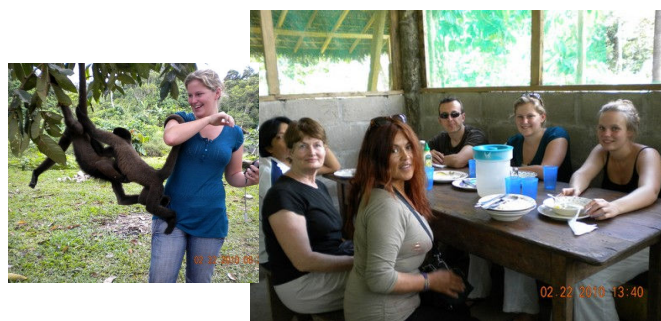
Shanti to Kamak Maki . . .

Volunteer coordinator **Shanti Freitas**, who has done a splendid job over the past year and a half working with individuals and groups of volunteers left Yanapuma on the 12th of March to spend two months working with the project in Kamak Maki.

She will help in the organization and planning of the ethnographic museum and visitor centre, and will be able to identify points at which Yanapuma can help in the long-term development of the project.

Davis Courtney— volunteer group leader Davis Courtney who had previously worked with us for 6 months, returned to Yanapuma in March to work on fundraising projects prior to escorting a volunteer group to various projects around Ecuador.

Sophie Bouteiller worked with us on video production from February until April creating a video about the children of Estero de Plátano and starting a video about Bua.



Teachers and students studying in an indigenous community

Volunteers

At the start of April 20 volunteers arrived from the UK through the LEAP. They will spend up to 10 weeks working on 3 projects in different regions of the country, carrying out work in conservation and the environment, sustainable agriculture, and construction.

Our “**Volunteer Ecuador**” program has stayed busy during March and April with 9 volunteers placed around Ecuador and 12 in Quito during this period.

Institutional Development

As part of our ongoing institutional development Yanapuma has contracted the services of an external accounting firm e-Valora. They will take over responsibility for handling all the foundation accounting and will put in place systems that will allow us to conform with the most rigorous of international accounting standards. We are also discussing with them the possibility of an organizational audit to streamline the processes, administration and communication within the organization. Our overall aim is to develop an efficient organization capable of managing its resources in the most effective way.

Meanwhile, our accounts for 2009 have now been reviewed, finalized and submitted. A revised account will be uploaded to our website very soon.

Photo Gallery

