Introduction by the Executive Director

In September of 2017 we completed our 11th year of operation as Fundación Yanapuma. Each year brings new challenges as economic and other conditions shift on both a local and global basis. For the past two years we have been adapting to those changes in order to assure our sources of self-funding as a “social enterprise”.

Within Ecuador we have witnessed more than a decade of significant growth and change in the indices of development and improvements to infrastructure, health and education. But these improvements have not been symmetrical, and while overall indices have improved, those at the bottom of the economic ladder still lack critical assistance in order to improve the lives of their families and their economic situation. It is with these populations that Fundación Yanapuma seeks to work, offering support to grass-roots organizations and indigenous community groups to encourage them to develop sustainably.

At the same time, over the years we have become aware that helping some beneficiaries to get their feet on the first rung of the economic ladder is not really a sufficient result either, as those at the very bottom of the economic system tend to be those who are most vulnerable to large swings in the price of the goods they produce, especially in the realm of agriculture. We have noted for instance that for the Tsa’chila cacaoteros (producers of cacao for chocolate), producing an organic cacao of a superior variety still has no palpable advantage for them as the local collection centers are not yet set up to differentiate the qualities of cacao they purchase, mixing all cacao together.

These external factors are to some extent beyond our control, but we can work to make connections for them with other producers of organic and/or superior quality cacao through whom they can begin to sell their improved harvests.
Likewise with our scholarship program in the coastal community of Estero de Plátano. We have helped many youth to graduate from high school over the 9 years of the program, but if there are no suitable opportunities at the local level they are forced to look beyond their community for work options.

These are ongoing challenges for us, and as situations continue to develop over time we are hopeful that things will fall into place and allow beneficiaries to be able to advance their lives meaningfully on a local level.

Other projects that we have been involved with show more direct results – the vegetable gardens for Tsa’chila families, the “edible forest” reforestation project, nutrition education, for example. The “edible forest” project is particularly interesting in that it is aimed at improving the quality of life of beneficiaries through reforestation with native species and additional productive species that offer greater food security and forest products for crafts and other forms of production. So it is not primarily aimed at economic advancement, rather well-being through reforestation and food security.

As in previous years we have worked hard to maintain and develop our own sources of income through the Spanish schools and our travel agency – True Ecuador Travel. This year we took another step with the Spanish schools by expanding more into the online Spanish class market, acquiring two online Spanish class websites. Both of these have required a huge amount of work to get functioning well, and as of writing this is a process that is still very much under way. What the online Spanish classes offer us is a less seasonally-affected source of income. Both the Spanish schools and the travel agency are highly dependent on the seasonal flow of tourists and visitors to Ecuador with significant ups and downs.

At the end of 2017 we also took the decision to get fully behind a campaign of social media and promotion, focusing on the area of educational travel – study abroad, service learning, etc. With this initiative we expect to become more engaged with universities and other organizations seeking meaningful engagement in Ecuador. The Spanish schools are part of this program, but not as previously the main source of income for the work of our foundation.

You can read in more detail about the events of 2017 below. We look forward to a busy and productive 2018, which you can keep in touch with through our regular bi-monthly newsletter.

Andrew Kirby
Director Ejecutivo

Structure of the organization

During 2016 Fundación Yanapuma maintained the same structure and organization as in previous years. Fundación Yanapuma is a registered Ecuadorian non-profit NGO under the Ministerio de Inclusión Economico y Social. As such we are not permitted to generate our own sources of income as
a non-profit. It was for that reason that we were obliged to separate the Spanish schools from the foundation and run them as a business which then pays the overheads for the foundation. This arrangement now includes True Ecuador Travel as well, as a limited company and travel agency registered with the Ministerio de Turismo. We have also added the websites 121spanish.com and fluento.com. Both of these are registered in the UK and run through a limited company called ¡oYe! Spanish, registered in London.

Additionally, Yanapuma Foundation as a separate registered charity in Scotland has continued to provide funding and resources to Yanapuma in Ecuador, principally through receiving funds into its UK bank account from volunteer groups and donations to disperse to Ecuador for project work.

The two foundations are entirely separate, and Yanapuma Foundation of Scotland files its own documents and reports under the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator for approval on an annual basis. Up-to-date information can be viewed online here: http://www.oscr.org.uk/charities/search-scottish-charity-register/charity-details?number=SC040519#results

**Yanapuma Spanish School**

The year 2017 saw a continuation of the situation in the previous few years, a reduction in the number of students visiting Ecuador to study Spanish. In part this can be blamed on the fact that most backpackers now prefer to explore Asia. After two decades of popularity, with backpackers arriving in Quito to learn a bit of Spanish before setting off around the rest of South and Central America, the focus has shifted to Asia where costs are lower, more people speak English and where there are now cheap internal flights making it much easier and more economical go get from one country to another.

Additionally, within South America both Peru and Colombia have attracted a greater share of students due to lower prices and the peace initiatives in Colombia. The high relative value of the US dollar, Ecuador’s currency, has been a significant factor along with

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Colombia's devaluation of their peso have been significant factors in reducing student numbers in Ecuador.

All that aside, the schools in Quito and Cuenca have continued to receive students of all ages. The school in Cuenca has been especially busy as many students prefer to study in this tranquil and historic colonial city. Many of these students have been retired or semi-retired persons visiting Cuenca to see if they would like to retire there while others have been younger international students studying for a month or so to improve their general Spanish skills.

The school in Quito has been quieter with fewer students throughout much of the year with peaks in January to March and July to September. Our focus has shifted from promotion of the Spanish schools to working on the travel agency and the online Spanish classes as more promising sources of income. We have been content to just wait and see what will happen to the Spanish market before making any investment.

When Yanapuma began back in 2006 the Spanish school was 100% of the business. That has changed significantly over the years, especially in the last two years, so that now the Spanish schools only represent around 20%-25% of our income. Thus we can afford to be patient and figure out the best strategy to incorporate the Spanish schools into our other activities as part of our overall “social enterprise” model of income generation.

In the first months of 2017 two opportunities to expand our online Spanish class presence presented themselves. Firstly, we had provided teachers for a Germany-based business – Fluento – for online Spanish classes for a number of years. The owners put the business on the market and we completed the purchase in April.

Right away we realized that there was much work needed to renew the website which had been originally designed back in 2008 and appeared quite out of date as well as being very...
hard to manage. We carried out a complete re-design, launching the new site in June. Fluento.com caters mostly to students in Europe with the pages in German, English, French, Italian and Russian.

The other website that we acquired is 121spanish.com, a site that caters mostly to students in the US, although there are students taking Spanish classes from all over the world. It took us until the end of the year to really get settled in to maintaining and thinking about expanding the site and this will be a priority for 2018.

Between these two websites we are generating some additional income already, although we realize that we need to invest in both to be able to increase the number of students in the future and generate additional income on a regular basis. In addition to developing new materials for the teachers to use we will also be adopting the “Adobe Connect” platform. This is much more professional than Skype which all the other online language schools use, and offers an integrated platform with the ability to open documents, PDFs, Powerpoints, videos, whiteboard and chat all within the same screen. So we believe it will give us the edge over other online Spanish schools and allow us to present a more professional appearance to potential students.

Volunteer Department

Throughout 2017 we received a steady number of volunteers both individually and in groups.

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We hosted:

Individual volunteers and Interns: 25
KulturLife - Weltwarts program: 12 volunteers
Leap UK groups: 4 groups, total 73 volunteers
Outlook Expeditions: 5 groups, total 47 volunteers
Colége Edouard Montpetit: 1 group, 14 volunteers
Sotogrande International School: 1 group, 11 volunteers
Vanderbilt University: 18 volunteers
Pacific Discovery: X groups, XX volunteers

Total: 199 volunteers

The individual volunteers stayed for periods between one week and one year. The groups from Outlook Expeditions spend five days in different indigenous communities and grass-roots projects carrying out short construction and maintenance projects. Yanapuma’s role is to make sure that the materials are on site for their arrival and that the project is ready to go.

At the other extreme are the volunteers from the German Weltwarts program who spend a whole year working in an indigenous community or grass-roots project offering their skills as English teachers, teaching assistants and other roles. Spending a whole year in such a project is a big challenge to these youth, coming from a very civilized and well-developed society like Germany to be placed in a developing rural community in the Amazon rain forest, the Andes mountains or at the Pacific coast. In general they adapt very well and have a great and memorable experience in addition to making significant contributions to their host community. However we have had two occasions where these volunteers have not been able to fully adapt or cope with the demands and have had to leave the sites before completing their work. For Yanapuma it is a challenge to prepare these volunteers for the experience that awaits them and to make sure they have the necessary psychological strength to adapt successfully.

The groups from the Leap we have been receiving since we first set up Yanapuma. Now after 11 years we have received 44 groups that have contributed to a number of development projects over the years. We always note to the newly arrived group that they may, if they are lucky, get to see a small...
However, mostly they will contribute to something that is ongoing and although they may not feel like they have achieved much over the three weeks that they spend in a program, as an NGO working with the community over a number of years, we do see the difference that they are making.

Organizing volunteer projects is always a delicate balance between making sure that the community itself will profit from the group’s input, while at the same time it offers an interesting and worthwhile experience to the volunteer. We have had negative experiences with volunteers for whom we have set up a project only to have them decide not to continue with it for reasons such as it is too isolated, or the bus ride or walk is too far. This is frustrating for us and for the receiving organization, and although we do what we can to make sure that each volunteer understands exactly what they are getting into, it still does happen from time to time.

In addition to the groups from the Leap in Ecuador, we also received the first group in April for projects in Peru. Run along the same lines as the Ecuador projects, the group spent the first few days in the colonial city of Arequipa learning Spanish before going off to volunteer in the community of Coporaque in Colca Canyon. After that they hiked into the Canyon for a couple of days before moving on to Puno on the banks of Lake Titicaca where they visited the famous floating islands of Uros.

After volunteering with an Aymara community on the banks of the lake they moved up to Cusco to volunteer in a community in the Sacred Valley. To finish off the group visited the renowned Machu Picchu archaeological site.

The group from Sotogrande worked with the Tsa’chila culture in the community of Bua, working with the group from the cultural center as well as at the local school. Their commitment to providing a meaningful educational experience for their students is admirable and is reflected in the attitude and dedication of their volunteers to the work they carry out.
The group from Vanderbilt University arrived to volunteer at a variety of projects in Quito. Some of the students also took Spanish classes and all stayed with host families. A problem we ran into this year is that some of the volunteer sites already had enough volunteers working there. This is a problem that occurs sometimes as sites receive inquiries from other international organizations to work with them. The result is that there is not enough work for the volunteers and it ends up being a frustrating experience. The only option going forward would be to find new sites that do not have contacts to receive volunteers from other organizations.

As 2017 drew to a close, we reflected on our successes and failures during the year. We will be focusing our efforts in 2018 on developing study abroad and service learning programs that may combine Spanish study with volunteer projects and other travel arrangements to provide educational travel experiences.

**True Ecuador Travel**

In January of 2017 we launched our own land-based tours of the Galapagos. There are 8 different programs from 5 to 10 days in length. These proved popular during the year and we sold around 60 programs. We hope to double this number in 2018.

To help our visitors get the most out of their trip to the Galapagos we have developed an app that each visitor gets access to. Here they can upload their personal documents as well as view their vouchers and other documents from us, along with information on the Galapagos islands history and environment, free and low-cost activities to do in their free time, and a 4-day weather forecast for several islands.

We also offer Galapagos cruises for those seeking that kind of experience, but generally found that our clients prefer the more economical prices of our land-based tours along with the greater freedom that these afford through not being tied to being on a boat for the whole time. This is especially relevant for families with younger children who need more space to roam around.

In addition to Galapagos programs we also
sold a number of Amazon tours through Dracaena Tours. These economical journeys into the Cuyabeno Reserve are well-organized and dependable for us to recommend to our clients.

Additional activities included making travel arrangements for groups and our Spanish students – hotels, excursions, flights, travel arrangements, etc – to complement their other activities in Ecuador.

In 2016 we had become members of the Forum on Education Abroad, and decided to attend their conference in Seattle in March of 2017. This was an opportunity to present our programs and options to a number of universities and other organizations to receive their students and groups for programs in Ecuador. It was also a good opportunity to learn from these same entities what they look for in a good study abroad or service learning program.

Throughout 2017 we did not have the time or resources to really get behind promoting the website beyond a little basic SEO work. However, the site continues to rise up slowly in the organic search engines and we are determined to make time and dedicate resources in 2018 for this work. We will also create a social media campaign to reach a wider audience.

**Staff and Interns 2017**

During the course of the year we were lucky to work with staff and interns in a variety of roles. After working as our volunteer coordinator for 9 months, Maria José Arellano left us for a post with the local government (whose salaries we cannot match!). We were sorry to see her go. She was replaced by Miguel Barreiros who had previously been a group leader with us.

Alejandro Saá became our group leader for our first group in Peru in April. Alejandro had previously led groups for us in Ecuador and was the perfect choice to begin a program located so far from our offices in Quito.

At the same timer Thijs Mommens and Joren Willems from Erasmus University in Belgium joined us in Quito as tourism interns to work on a variety of projects, including leading a volunteer group, for 4 months.

At the end of June we welcomed Claire Masure from France as an intern. Claire spent time in our offices in Quito before joining staff in Cuenca to help in the school there. She produced several short videos of Ecuador.

Leading our volunteer groups for the latter part of 2017 was Charlotte Ford. She was leader for Leap groups in July and...
September as well as returning in January to lead more groups for us.

In November we were pleased to welcome Anna Maria Carrera to work with us as our social media and study abroad coordinator, a huge task that she dove into with enthusiasm, helping us to sort out the tangle of social media accounts that we had opened up and subsequently neglected over the years.

Yanapuma Foundation

Yanapuma Foundation receives financial support from our for-profit activities in addition to external funding from other sources.

In July of 2017 we finished a project co-funded by the Inter American Foundation. Originally a 4-year project it was extended for one further year as we had not used all the funds available.

The project had three components:

- promotion of sustainable cacao production
- creation of vegetable gardens along with nutrition and diet educational
- reforestation and conservation

The project took place in 4 of the 7 Tsa’chila comunas of the province of Santo Domingo. As hunter-gatherers up until the 1960s the Tsa’chila suffered a huge dislocation of their culture and way of life with the destruction of the rain forests on the Pacific side of the Andes. Now confined to 7 territories, they have lacked the knowledge of farming to be able to adapt to living in one place. They have tended to follow the practices of their colonist neighbors, renting out their lands to them for agriculture, only to find that they used the worst chemical-based systems until the soil was depleted before moving on and leaving the Tsa’chila with unproductive land.

In addition, with no concept of sound nutrition they have tended to grow and sell everything in order to purchase cheap rice and noodles and eat along with locally produced plantain and yucca – all starches, with very little protein added and no vegetables.

The great success of this project is something that we had not originally proposed, even though it was a stated part of our mission, but which became feasible through the processes we engaged in during the 5 years. At the start we employed an agricultural specialist, a community organizer, and a project coordinator to manage the project. By the end
of the project we employed a field team of 4 persons – Rafael Machin and Wilson Calazacon (both Tsa’chila) to manage the cacao part of the project, and Cristina Calazacon (also Tsa’chila) and Janeth Llanos (resident of Santo Domingo) to manage the vegetable gardens, nutrition education and “edible forest” reforestation project. Three of the four are Tsa’chila which makes it much easier for them to communicate with beneficiaries in their native Tsa’fiki as well as in Spanish. The team achieved a high level of acceptance from the beneficiaries in the 4 comunas.

The last activity of the project was to offer training in accounting for project management so that the team can manage the basic financial aspects of maintaining a development project.

As a follow up to this project we helped the team to write a new funding proposal that will be presented once they form a suitable legal organization that can receive funding and manage a bank account. We hope this will be completed in the first months of 2018. This allows Yanapuma to take one step backwards, and move the Tsa’chila culture one step closer to being able to manage their own development projects. We will still be there to help with any problems that arise and to be able to audit their advances and offer guarantees to any would-be funders that their donation will be well used.

Vegetable production and the “Edible Forest”

It has been a fairly long process to adapt the concept of a vegetable garden to a humid tropical environment. Many beneficiaries were put off at the start by the need to experiment to a certain extent to find out what worked and what did not, but by the end of the project we had defined very well what can and cannot be done in such a climate and conditions. Making compost with worms for example proved impossible as they are the favorite food of the many colonies of ants that live in such an environment.

Janeth and Cristina worked with beneficiaries over the years to refine the processes so that it got easier for new families joining the program for the first time. In addition to reshaping the plastic roof of the plots which are necessary to keep the fierce rains off the newly sprouting plants, they recovered local edible plants that grow in the rain forests and introduced hardier varieties of different vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, tubers and beans.

By the end of the project in July, we had at least 14 families totally self-sufficient with their vegetable gardens. They are able to save seeds and reproduce plants from cuttings and have learned to continue experimenting to further improve their vegetable plots. Many other families are almost to the
same stage but still need a little encouragement and advice on occasion.
Continuing with the vegetable plots will form an integral part of any further funding requests.

Nutritional and diet education with the Tsa’chila
Cristina has been the principal health and nutrition promoter in the latter years, while Janeth who originally had this role moved over more to the vegetable garden side. The practice of visiting families in rotation to teach about diet and nutrition proved to be much more effective than trying to organize workshops due to the particular dynamics of Tsa’chila culture. Cristina was able to document significant advances in the general awareness of the importance of good nutrition for expectant mothers, young children and the family in general.

Central to the process of teaching about nutrition and diet was carrying out cooking classes with the various families on an ongoing basis. Seeing how easy it is to incorporate vegetables into the diet made it much more acceptable and easier for the beneficiaries to make significant changes in their dietary habits. Positive feedback from their own family members helped to incorporate these new habits into their regular meals.

There are still many families that could benefit from diet and nutrition education, and now there is greater openness to these ideas as the families have seen how others have incorporated new recipes into their daily food. So there is still considerable scope for continuing with this aspect of the project.

Cacao production with the Tsa’chila
Our work on improving cacao production progressed fairly well during the 5 years of the project, but hit a major snag in the last year or so in the form of a fungal disease called “monilla”. This fungus spreads very easily and affects the developing cacao pods, causing them to rot completely. A fresh crop of spores is released and these can then drift in the wind to affect new trees.
It is supposed that due to slight changes in the climate, with the summer being a little colder and damper than normal, this encouraged the development and spread of the fungus. In the end the cacao harvest was severely affected, including both the improved and more flavorful national varieties and the less flavorful but more productive cloned varieties. Some farmers uprooted their cacao trees to plant something that would guarantee some form of income for them as they were relying on a reasonable harvest to be able to pay off debts.

The general demoralization of the cacao growers drastically lowered interest in continuing with the cacao project. However, a sufficiently committed core of farmers has remained with the project to grow improved, fine-aroma cacao so that there is hope for the future of this project.

Rafael and Wilson have begun the process of re-animating the association of cacao growers. They had prepared and submitted all the papers in 2016 to the office in Pedernales nearer the coast as they had heard that it was quicker to do it all there. Unfortunately the devastating earthquake struck not long after and all the papers were lost when the Ministerio de Agricultura building collapsed. They have subsequently re-submitted and are awaiting the final approval.

Meantime they are looking at developing post-harvest techniques – fermenting, drying, toasting, etc, to add value to their production. This is an essential step on the way to creating a more sustainable income as the more processing that is done to the raw material the more stable the price. It is the very worst situation for the farmers to harvest their cacao and then have to sell it to whoever comes along with a truck and offers them whatever they can get away with at the time.

Post-harvest processing will form an important part of any future project work in cacao.
Scholarships for high school study

Our scholarship program to provide funds to youth to study at high school started in the coastal community of Estero de Plátano in 2008 at the suggestion of mothers there who complained that it was difficult to get ahead as a community if they had no education. Most children leave school there at 13 with just the basics in reading and writing.

So we began to fundraise at Christmas to support the brightest to study at the nearest high school a 40-minute bus ride away. The program grew and we began charging a $25 registration fee to all students to go directly to this fund to reduce the risks of not being able to raise enough funds each year to continue to support the youth.

The project spread to the community of Bua in 2013 with the help of the Colége Edouard Montpetit of Canada who have sponsored one or two scholarships each year since. In addition, in 2017 Sotogrande International School also began to offer support for youth in Bua to continue their studies.

As the local school there was designated to become an “Escuela del Milenio” under the government of Rafael Correa that would include all levels of high school, we began to offer support to graduated students for post high school studies. In addition we began sponsoring a Tsa’chila elementary teacher to become qualified to teach at the secondary level, reasoning that as all the other teachers are non-Tsa’chila that it is necessary to have at least one who can work with students in their own language and help to incorporate learning about their own culture and traditions at the secondary level.

Finally, as we had begun to work with the small indigenous school Yachay Wasi in the south of Quito we saw the need to provide some funding to poor families there to keep their children in school. Yachay Wasi focuses on incorporating traditional Andean cosmology and teaching into the regular curriculum and is an important agent in maintaining the relevance of Kichwa culture to the modern situation.

One of our first students to receive help was a young girl who had been assumed to have learning difficulties. With the extra help that we were able to offer through a scholarship she has been able to overcome her situation and became top of the class! We also offered her mother, who relies on occasional work on building sites and whatever she can find, a regular part-time job cleaning our offices so that she at least has some regular income.

Agato community developments

Introduced to us by our volunteer coordinator Maria José Arellano, the community of Agato has proven to be an excellent location to send volunteer groups to contribute to the development of the community. It is a community that has maintained much of its traditional way of life, although the impetus for working with Yanapuma has been the realization that the traditions are beginning to fade and youth are turning away from their culture. The development of community tourism is a means of highlighting the importance of their traditional culture and maintaining it as a means of attracting tourists. Our groups got plenty of opportunity to learn about the culture and the community during their stay there.
Groups that visited Agato included The Leap, Pacific Discovery and two volunteers on the Weltwarts program.

Hacienda Tranquila – Conservation on the Galapagos
As in previous years we were happy to continue supporting the work of Hacienda Tranquila on the Galapagos Islands during 2017. We were able to send a number of volunteer groups from The Leap as well as individual volunteers to work on conservation projects and sustainable agriculture.

Principally the work involves uprooting and eradicating invasive species of plants that replace tradition food supplies for the endemic fauna such as the giant tortoises. It is an endless job and one we are happy to continue supporting in the future. In addition the volunteers get the chance to take part in horse therapy with children with learning difficulties from the local community. This makes a welcome break on some days from the back-breaking work of rooting out the invading plants.

Donations and project funding in 2017
Our annual Christmas fundraiser at the end of 2017 raised a total of $3,250 for our scholarship fund up to the time of completing this report. We are also pleased to report that we have been promised a $5,000 donation to this fund by a former student from the US. At the time of writing we are applying for approval with the American Fund for Charities in order to be able to make US donations tax deductible.

Conclusion
The year 2017 was a year of hard work for all of us at Yanapuma as we continued the process of adapting to changing international conditions that affect our income stream. We ended the year with a small positive balance which at time of writing we are waiting for our accountants to confirm and sign off on.

We feel that we have laid the groundwork for greater success in 2018 and are looking forward to a busy but fruitful year as the travel agency continues to grow along with the online Spanish classes. We know that our project to grow our Study Abroad programs will take a while, dependent upon semester-long processes in universities and colleges, and that in all probability it will be 2019 before we see significant results.

We also hope to see new funding for our field team of Tsa’chila in Santo Domingo, this time with a project in which they will take the primary roles and responsibility with Yanapuma offering support to keep the project on track and assure funders that all is going according to plan.

This will represent a moment of success for Yanapuma, the result of 10 years of project work with key members of the Tsa’chila culture, dedicated to learning new skills and passing those on to their fellow Tsa’chila. As we publish this annual report the new project is written and ready to present but we are waiting for the legal framework for the group to be put in place so that it can be presented.

This process will give us some time to catch our breath a little, focus on maintaining the business side of the organization and begin to plan for the future, building on the base of what we have achieved so far.
We also look forward to extending the scholarship program. Education is such a key component of successful development, giving small communities the possibility to organize and plan for the future with confidence. With education the playing field is levelled somewhat and members of marginalized communities can develop according to their own criteria.

Once again we thank all our supporters, students, volunteers, interns and clients who have kept us going over another year of hard work and dedication!

Notes

Readers wishing to learn more detail about the work of the foundation over the past year or years are advised to read our bi-monthly newsletters. These can be viewed or downloaded online here: http://www.yanapuma.org/en/news.php

Please feel free to email us with any questions or comments. You can contact us at: volunteer@yanapuma.org