

ANDREW FINCH EDUCATION TRUST

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION. The situation in Ecuador is not good. The country has been falling into an even worse economic recession. Many businesses in Ambato have sold up or decreased in size. Many owners are looking to emigrate and invest in, for example, Peru or Colombia as they are very pessimistic about the future. Many people have lost their jobs and the people do not believe that the new president can improve this. The poor and those without power and influence always suffer the most in this situation.

There is a new educational system. The education 'basic superior' comprises 10 years of basic education (children around 14 years old), then they begin BGU (Bachillerato General Unificado, Unified general baccalaureate), this BGU takes three years. After that they can go the university, or any other option to improve their education. Unfortunately in recent times many technical institutes have closed and there are fewer options. They can also choose a military career, as a sponsored boy wishes to do.

OUR SITUATION. There are still 16 sponsored children. A further 17 children, siblings of those sponsored, received nearly the same benefits. Fourteen other children who attended the Library and Andrew Finch Centre received partial benefits. There are 14 sponsors. There was a monthly meeting with the children and at least one of their parents, usually the mother, when 84 food parcels were distributed. These parcels contained rice, semolina, pasta, flour (bean, wheat & pea), oats, lentils and sardines. Four items of clothing (sweaters and shoes) were given to children.

AFET Centres: Two nearly new laptops were bought. We are much encouraged that the parents are beginning to participate in our activities and are providing some supervision. The main activities have been use of the library and watching of videos. There were short courses on computers for primary school children; board and creative games; toys and play material for smaller siblings; two small reading competitions were held and activities were focused on maintaining the interest of children in reading. Families are also participating in activities such as, as ecology, music and dance via our clubs, repairing and making of books. Local volunteers continue with short courses in computers, English language and Spanish grammar. They also taught some mathematics. In Techo Propio five secondary students have helped with cleaning the centre and organizing the books and games. In Mocha we had two secondary students helping mostly with the Ecology club and reading activities. These young people are paid a grant depending on the support they give. School expenses are supported by the fund and parents giving support also have a grant.

Library. Having bought 24 new books, produced 70 of our own and disposed of a number of worn out books we have 2106 books and have also bought magazines

Education. Gladys is in her fourth semester at University and doing well. She is really happy and is considering doing a Master's in education as she loves her practical work with children and young people. She has classes from 7 am to 5 pm four days and on the fifths she has work practice in a school in Ambato from 8 am to 7 pm. I wonder how our University students would feel about this, particularly as she has to travel to and fro on the bus. Twenty two children studied in secondary school and twenty four in primary. Most of the children are good students but some have needed additional classes in Mathematics, Social Studies, Language and English in order to pass the level. We have continued helping the students with internet expenses for their homework.

Health: A girl needed eye tests, we supported by part paying consultations, transport and glasses. A girl who is receiving orthodontic treatment was helped with consultation and X ray. This year the price of these treatments has increased enormously and we have decided that we cannot help other children with this treatment. A girl with nephritis was helped with consultations, medicines and transport. 14 children were helped with the general exam required by the school at the beginning of the school year

Other activities. In the holidays the student were offered good summer courses, organized by the municipalities and schools so running our own courses seemed unnecessary. We gave the parents help with transportation, registration and materials for these courses.

Christmas Celebration. We want to thank our sponsors very much for Christmas presents for the children. This year we gave sport supplies such as footballs, basketballs, skateboards, and jackets and toys for the younger ones. In our Christmas celebration the winner and finalists of the card competition and were awarded prizes.

Next Year: We aim to continue to support parents as much as we can. We plan on continuing to support the children and the families as in the past, and in particular to encourage reading and the development of the clubs.

Budget Spend: Apart from the expenses as outlined above, we have paid to rent and maintain the two buildings.

The children, parents and ourselves are really grateful to all our supporters, especially at this time when the country has great problems with rising unemployment and the cost of living still increasing..

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