



Global
Pediatric
Alliance



English : Español

What We Do

Where We Work

Support Us

About

What We Do

Resources

In Ecuador:

"Water Is Life": Potable Water in San Pedro de Auca Paarti

Aida Rivadeneira, mother of four and grandmother of one, pours water from the tap in her kitchen into a pitcher to make fresh lemonade. This simple act is a novelty for Aida, who for the first time has clean drinking water in her house.

She explains how she and 19 other families in her community, San Pedro de Auca Paarti, achieved this feat.

"At first we were going to build a reservoir from a stream, but the (cost) estimates were too high so it didn't work out. Then we decided to use tanks to capture rain water, and we are very happy with the project."

Through a Grassroots Grant, GPA provided San Pedro de Auca Paarti with funding so families could install plastic gutters, simple mesh filters, and 500-liter water tanks to catch rain water, of which 150 inches falls annually in this region of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The GPA project coincided with construction of 35 new houses, sponsored by the Ecuadorian housing ministry, so the families have brand new roofs that provide plenty of surface area to catch water effectively.



With the arrival of running water, things have changed dramatically, Aida says. "Before the project (with GPA) it was a huge sacrifice because we had to get water from streams or the Napo River. Now this rain water is better because it runs directly into our house and it's naturally potable, so it's much better for our kids' health."

In fact, Aida has already noticed a difference in her own family: "Three or four months ago, the kids had fevers, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, all those things. Now that they have clean water to drink they are much healthier."

Although many communities capture rain water, few others channel it from roofs, filter it, and store it in large tanks as San Pedro is doing. Community members now see the potential for dramatically increasing their water supply by installing more and larger rain water tanks. "Our vision is to have a greater source of water," Aida explains, brainstorming about the possibility of using the large school and community center roofs for catchment.

Having solved the problem of scarce potable water, people are now focusing less on what they lack and more on what they can do. This creative drive is exactly what GPA intends to catalyze through our Grassroots Grants program. With generous support from our donors, we can continue to empower San Pedro and other communities to discover their own solutions and see lasting improvements in their



GPA Ecuador Program Director Mary Fifield stands with water committee members Nancy Andi, Jaime Alvarado, Betty Chimbo, Consuela Rivadeneira and Aida Rivadeneira.

[more photos](#)

children's health.

Healthier Children, Healthier Environment: Dry Ecological Toilets in Cuya Loma

After receiving a GPA grassroots partnerships grant this spring, the Amazonian community of Cuya Loma built 10 dry ecological toilets for 10 families and is finishing construction on an additional household toilet and a toilet for the kindergarten. The low-cost dry ecological toilets, which neither use nor contaminate water, produce 100% safe and organic compost that can improve the output of family and school gardens. This benefit is especially important in this region, where the soil is poor and many children suffer from malnutrition.



Since September, the community has performed regular inspections to address any problems and teach families how to maintain the toilets. As of the last report, all families are using them well and are pleased with the results. The community has also enlisted the help of Peace Corps volunteers to teach children how to use of the toilets, how the toilets benefit their health and the environment, and how they can maintain proper hygiene. Irene Cerda, community president and a mother, said her 6-year old son, Kanbik, sings the "hygiene" song that the Peace Corps volunteer Mary Fassnacht taught as part of her elementary school curriculum. Like Kanbik, who knows to wash his hands before meals and after using the bathroom, many children in Cuya Loma are learning the importance of good hygiene as well as benefiting from ecologically safe sanitation.

Check back for more updates on these and other GPA projects in Ecuador!



At the signing ceremony, Doña Estela Margarita, president of Tzoblej Chihchil, stamps her fingerprint on the legal act, assisted by GPA Chiapas Program Director Alejandra Alvarez. Watching in support are the hospital and health center directors. themselves and the mothers they care for.

In Chiapas:

Midwives form a legal organization!

On September 27, 2008, the indigenous midwives from Yajalón that GPA has trained and supported over the years achieved a long-time goal: forming a legal organization that is recognized by local and state health authorities. This is a major step forward in preventing unnecessary maternal death during childbirth, because agreements can now be formalized that will allow midwives to bring laboring mothers to the hospital for obstetric emergencies. Additionally, through the organization, known as "Tzoblej Chihchil," midwives now have significantly more leverage in advocating for

The goals of Tzoblej Chihchil are to provide:

- Continuous training for midwives, incorporating both Western methods and traditional practices;
- Credentials for trained members so they can be professionally recognized in the medical community;
- Establishment of a Labor House where low-risk births can be attended by midwives, and, if needed, women can be easily transferred to a hospital;
- Increased education for new mothers on topics such as vaccination and government-sponsored health insurance; and
- The ability to seek funding to sustain their work.

At a joyous signing celebration, attended by key local health officials, including both the hospital and health center directors, Tzoblej President Dona Estela Margarita said: "I never thought



that something like this would happen, to have an organization, an association that is legal, and all these people from the municipality here with us and offering all the support we need."

The unprecedented support of senior medical staff is a testimony to the increasing recognition of traditional midwifery as a vital component of indigenous health care. GPA has facilitated these relationships since we began working in Chiapas in 2004. Chiapas Program Director Alejandra Alvarez has been instrumental in coordinating the legalization process and helping the members identify goals and priorities.

Check back for more updates on these and other GPA projects in Chiapas!

Find out more about the history of our work in [Guatemala](#), [Ecuador](#), and [Mexico](#).