

Dear **fhn** supporters,

November 2009

Welcome to the latest update of our activities. There has been a lot going on with **fhn** and I will summarise it all in a few paragraphs.



Ecuador has taken the lead on some interesting projects of late, but first we should welcome David Guevara (from Quito) as the new co-ordinator of our activities in Ecuador. He is extremely well suited for the job having gained the relevant practical experience with several other NGOs. He is also academically highly qualified. The Casa Multiple, a multi-use building for meetings and accommodation was finished early this year. This provides shelter for our volunteer doctor, medical students, educational volunteer, as well as the community health promoters when they come to the health center for their monthly workshops. With the help of **fhn** Germany, Joanna Ortega – a Peace Corps Volunteer - has introduced our first micro-credit enterprise which distributes small loans to health committee members for a variety of economic initiatives. It also provides valuable time to unify and strengthen these groups that are so integral to community development and who are undervalued in a very ‘macho’ society.



Another interesting entrepreneurial idea that has recently come to fruition was started by **fhn** USA. We are all concerned about the isolation experienced by the dispersed communities of El Páramo. It can take up to ten hours walking in mud for some community members to reach the health centre and several hours to reach school or a market. Nokia has been working with NGOs, such as **fhn**, to try and help with this. Through the provision of Nokia SmartPhones to Community Health Workers in the vicinity, the **fhn**-INdT-Nokia project aims to improve communication between remote communities and the health centre and to improve collection of demographic and epidemiological data. This allows **fhn** to gain an ever more extensive and upto-date picture of local needs and plan the use of our resources more effectively. Created with open source technologies, the system utilises the inherent advantages of mobile phone technology in mountainous and jungle terrain to enable smooth information transfer between teams in the field and the health centre - and vice versa.



Photographs © Aldo Martinez Jr





We have a very emotional moment in the history of the project coming in November. I am returning to Ghana with Mrs Huttel for the first time since **fhn** took over in 2003. Mrs Huttel is the elderly German missionary who started this project over 20 years ago. **fhn** now feels that the project is 'good' enough to show her, and this will probably be her last visit to Ghana as her health is declining.

The Ghana project is going very well, and thanks to money raised by former **fhn** volunteer doctor Jackie Harris, our new accommodation block is almost built. This has been a major hindrance to the project since we were unable to accept a community nurse from the government since we had nowhere to put her! Health centre staff and their respective families were also living in extremely cramped quarters. Many thanks to Jackie and friends for such a significant donation.

We are also very excited to have Vera back from university. She is a local girl 'done good' who we sponsored to further her education and she will return later this year to the clinic. This is one of the most satisfying aspects of our work in that we can educate committed and hard working employees in order for them to reach new levels of education and training, unattainable without the necessary financial backing.

Our community health volunteers are working extremely well on their malaria prevention drive. Malaria is still our main disease burden and we are working towards the goal of an insecticide treated net in every hut. They are also very keen to start farming on the land around the health centre, in order to put money back into the project.



We have had some excellent volunteers over the last few months, including Dr Gemma Springgay who has just returned from three months in Ghana. She is being 'replaced' by an Indian/American paediatrician who we wish well. Paul (**fhn** trustee) and I are off to Liverpool to talk to the Tropical Medicine Doctors and see if we can carry on our successful recruitment policy.

You will be hearing a lot more from me in November so I will keep this short!

A huge thanks goes to Tim Brown, who, despite almost half a day of pain and suffering, completed his first Ironman (2.4 mile swim, 112 miles on a bike followed by a full 26 mile marathon) and raised us around £5,000. What an incredible achievement.

Last but not least, many congratulations to Andrew (**fhn** occupational therapy volunteer) and Sophie (**fhn** volunteer doctor in Ecuador and Ghana, and now doctor volunteer co-ordinator!) upon their marriage... about time! All the best for the future.

Thanks again to all our supporters for your continued help and donations. There would be no project without you.



Thanks for reading

Ed Gold and the rest of the **fhn**
UK team

