

SWYAA Activity Reports - Disaster Relief Action

Ecuador Earthquake Disaster Relief

Last April, Ecuador was struck by a 7.8 magnitude earthquake that affected the coastal area of Bahia. The country was not prepared for such a natural disaster. Our friend, Monica Luque SWY7, is originally from Bahia and promptly requested the support of SWYAA Ecuador to send immediate relief to her hometown. The Luque family needed to be evacuated since their home was uninhabitable but they remained in town in order to help the victims. The "Help Ecuador" campaign was started among the SWY Community and our network seeking donations to send water, canned food, medicines, caskets, tents, etc. We successfully sent containers full of these urgently needed articles as a first response. We teamed with local volunteers and the Luque family in order to reach the victims of the disaster in an efficient manner.



Next, Maria Belen Moncayo SWY7 requested assistance to our alumni association in order to support a campaign to prevent sexual abuse of children and women in shelters. The campaign was named "Pita Fuerte," which means "blow your whistle strong," and focused on empowering children and women to use their whistle when sensing an endangered situation. The general public was also educated to assist and help the children when they heard a whistle sounding.

During the month of August, the alumni association performed 2 trips to visit the affected city of Bahia and delivered kits for personal hygiene and clothing. As part of the *Educate for Tomorrow* initiative, oral health education lectures were given in 4 villages.

SWYAA Ecuador helped reactivate the economy in the city of Bahia and surroundings. We received orders to purchase a variety of crafts from the area such as Montecristi Hats, straw baskets and fans. Purchasing directly from the artisans helped them to keep their small businesses growing and families could provide for their children.

SWYAA Ecuador met with the staff at the Embassy of Japan in Quito to dialogue and exchange ideas in order to celebrate the centennial anniversary of diplomatic relations between our countries. Ambassador Hitoshi Noda was eager to join the exPYs in their endeavors. As a long term plan, we discussed the implementation of a program on Education for Reconstruction after Natural Disasters applying previous experiences in Japan to the Ecuadorian disaster. The plan was proposed by Counselor Katsumi Itagaki, joining the SWY Alumni Association in reaching local schools and families to assist with preventing the loss of lives in the future.

We are very thankful to our sister alumni associations and exPYs around the world for donating and for the solidarity received during this difficult time.

If you wish to continue supporting the reconstruction of the city of Bahia and surrounding area, please contact SWYAA Ecuador. Gracias mil!

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Margarita Chattin SWY22 delivering personal hygiene kits to the children near the city of Bahia.



Ecuadorian expys from SWY1, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 22 at the Residence of the Ambassador of Japan in Quito.



Ivan Astudillo SWY7 and Counselor Itagaki during the cooperation agreement for Educate for Tomorrow in Earthquake disaster prevention.