



## HOW THE SCHOOL CAME ABOUT

One thing I really wanted to do in Ecuador was start a school for children with Special Needs. How to go about it? I had some money from a redundancy payment and started looking out for a building. Quite unexpectedly, while looking for accommodation in Santo Domingo, I stumbled upon a building which had been designed as a small church, with an enormous reception area and gorgeous curvy windows. The house was for sale. I was told that in Ecuador there are no surveyors, so I bought it as seen.

Then began a massive nightmare, as rain started coming in through the roof, the rainy season having just started. What had I done? What had I let myself in for? Architects and builders were called in and finally the roof was laid with another layer of cement, though I was told that this was no guarantee that the roof would not leak in the future. But for the time being it was all right. I moved in. This was March 2004. I had been living outside town, in the charity started by John and Brenda Hart, and had been collecting materials for working with Special Needs children.

Alexis, a bright eyed young boy with a lovely smile was my first pupil. He could not walk and I took him and his mother to see a physiotherapist. A friend, completely unknowing, sent me a disused walking frame from Britain. Soon Alexis was walking with his frame and engaging in many tasks<sup>i</sup>. Soon he was joined by two other boys. I became aware, however, that I would be unable to do this work unaided, and indeed, the idea was to work with local people. How was this to come about?

I received an email from Phil Tadman of SAMS (South American Mission Society) saying that an organization, Hope for the Future, was interested in working in Ecuador. It could be interested in working with us. The upshot of more correspondence was that this charity agreed to sponsor a teacher and an assistant for a year.

Somehow everything fell into place. Ecuadorians are keen to help each other find paid work, and I had no trouble getting a teacher and a teacher's assistant recommended to me.



So we started the school proper in April 2005, with five pupils. They did not all come every day, but always someone came! We were pioneering special needs teaching on the English model, and we would sink or swim by the quality of education we could offer. There was no service like this in the town, specializing in individual programmes of study. I did a lot of teacher training.

By the second year we had ten children, and every year since more children have come. We expanded from one to two classes, and then to three.

The school is now in its eighth year.

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<sup>i</sup> Alexis stayed with us for a few years, and was able to walk independently.

Jill Ball, Sept '13.

Life in Abundance (Ecuador) Trust

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