

Reflections REFLECTIONS?

God at Work In Ecuador

Daniela carefully fits the elastic band around one ear and then the other. She dons protective gear for the long shift ahead. She whispers yet another plea to God for protection and strength. At 23 years of age, Daniela has come to love and depend on Him in new and desperate ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her desire is to serve others with the same fervent love she felt from her sponsors over the course of her childhood.

When Daniela was 6 years old, she received the happy news that someone had chosen to sponsor her! She remembers with great joy how it felt knowing someone abroad was praying for her and helping to provide for her. The assistance she received – academic, physical, social-emotional and spiritual – through 12 years of sponsorship made a big difference!

With fondness and gratitude, Daniela recalls writing letters to her sponsor. Much to her delight, one day her sponsor wrote back! And there began a beautiful connection. Daniela shared nuggets about her daily life. She began to express her hopes and dreams for the future.

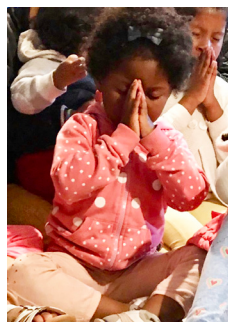
Her sponsors, in turn, shared their goals for growing closer to God. Daniela recounts, "All this was very special for me because they always encouraged me. They urged me to continue in the ways of the Lord. My faith grew, as well as my understanding of what it means to continue in God's ways. I will be forever thankful for my sponsors. They helped me a lot in my personal and spiritual life."

The Corona Virus pandemic in Ecuador struck during Daniela's rural internship as a budding obstetrician. She was immediately thrust into action, being sent from one city to another as needed. Battling fatigue, dealing with a lack of necessary supplies, feeling lonely during the separation from her family, she tries to keep fear and uncertainty from creeping in.

Daniela holds firmly to her heavenly Father's hand in the storm. She has seen God moving in her life. She is aware of His support and faithful provision amid very difficult circumstances.

She can't help but believe, God had been preparing her for such a time as this. A generous sponsor sowed and invested in Daniela's life for 12 years. Daniela is glad to serve and invest in the lives of others now.

"Jehovah is good, a strength in the day of trouble; and he knows those who trust him" (Nehum 1:7, paraphrase).



Majua,* a rural village on the majestic Esmeraldas River in Ecuador, is home to about 2,500 people. From the city of Esmeraldas on the coast, it takes several types of transportation – car, a bus, a moto or walking, and finally a motorized canoe to reach Majua! Twice a month a group of ICCM alumni and sponsored youth earn and save up for the round trip (\$20) fare to make the trek to Majua.

A few years ago, a member of our Free Methodist Church in Esmeraldas bought a piece of land on the river. This Christian hoped to use the property for retreats. The only noise is the sound of nature and of the flowing river nearby. It is a place of peace and tranquility.



It soon became obvious the purchased land would provide much more than retreat space. It would be the inroad to sharing Jesus with the abundant number of children and families in the vicinity, whose economic challenges are many. With no evangelical churches in the village, our Free Methodist leaders began to pray for opportunities to reach out to the people of Majua.

ICCM alumni and sponsored youth responded enthusiastically to ICCM National Coordinator María Belén's encouragement to use one's gifts and abilities to reach more children with the Good News of

God's love. A team was formed!

Twice a month, members of the ICCM family make the adventurous journey to Majua – building bridges with the children and their families as they talk, play together, and to share meals and needed supplies. The team is helping the children and families who receive them with open arms get to know God through His son Jesus Christ.



María Belén's own mother is excited about the ministry. After visiting Majua with the team she opened her own club for children in her part of Quito, Ecuador's capital!

God is using our ICCM alumni and youth in marvelous ways to extend His hand of love, care and salvation to all! They are pouring out what has been poured into them. Their enthusiasm is contagious.

Ready to hop in the motorized canoe?! I am!

*Pronounced MAH-hwah

Side note: Esmeraldas is experiencing an elevated number of COVID-19 cases. Our contacts from Majua report all we have worked with are fine so far. The team is looking forward to returning to Majua as soon as safety permits.



Wide-eyed David stood both surprised and beaming as he opened his gift box* at our Comité del Pueblo FMC in Quito, Ecuador. There they were! A real hammer, a real wrench, real nails and other real tools! National Coordinator María Belén thought David was showing her the contents of his box in hopes of trading them for toys. What a joy for her to hear an immediate and emphatic "No, Miss María! This is exactly what I asked God for! My mom and I need these!"

The humble home David and his single mother share needed repairs. David told his mom and God, "With the necessary supplies I will learn how to repair things and use those skills to help others."

Around the same time, someone somewhere packed those unlikely items in a shoebox. They got through all checkpoints and customs ... to arrive safely in a distant country to be placed in the hands of a specific young boy with big faith in God and big plans for service. Think how much God loves David – to orchestrate such a miracle!

*Occasionally para groups partner with ICCM in favor of the children.