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AMERICA/ECUADOR - "Adopt a project": people can redeem thanks to education

Quito (Agenzia Fides) - "Adopt a project" is a simple and concrete way to help situations of extreme poverty. The project allows the survival and growth of non-profit centers, created by AVSI projects during many years of work in the poorest countries in the world. Children and beneficiary families in Ecuador live in the Roldós-Pisullì area, neighborhoods characterized by high levels of poverty, lack of basic services, scarse security and low quality of life. Mothers normally dedicate themselves to household chores and the care of children, and fathers are employed primarily as laborers in the construction industry. Many of these children are children of single mothers, usually in their teens and abandoned in early pregnancy. The level of education is quite low, only 40 % successfully complete elementary and middle school. The present educational facilities are inadequate and insufficient in relation to the demand. Many students (including 5-6 year-old children) are forced to travel for hours and hours to reach the public schools that are willing to accept them. Children have a very poor diet and lack in protein and vegetables, which prevents adequate physical and emotional development. In 2004, AVSI in collaboration with the local parish and the Fundación Sembrar, a local non-profit organization, opened in Quito, a poor neighborhood in the north-western outskirts of the capital, an Educational Support Center and launched the PelCa program, which provides for teachers to go from house to house, and to families once every two weeks, distributing materials, monitoring the development of children and discussing educational issues with their mothers. There is 1 Community kindergarten and 4 well equipped family kindergartens, working from Monday to Friday. In the Community kindergarten "Ojos de Cielo" children are organized into groups of 15 guided by two "mother educators". The kindergartens are small family day care homes in the area in which some mothers welcome their children and the children of their neighbors (maximum 6 children per kindergarten). Here educational activities and the hygiene and health care of children are carried out. The attention towards the nutrition of children also depends on their mothers attending meetings where training on nutrition, hygiene and child education are held. In Quito educators are in most cases the inhabitants of these districts. In all the direct beneficiaries are 325 preschool children (60 of whom attend the Community kindergarten, other families attend the 4 family kindergartens), 200 school-age children and 250 parents. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 12/12/2013)

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