



## EQUAL EXCHANGE BANANAS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*For every bunch of Equal Exchange bananas you buy, as well as ensuring farmers receive a fair price, you're contributing to a Fairtrade premium that truly makes a difference in the lives of growers, their families and the whole community. For each box of Fairtrade bananas sold, an extra \$1.00 per box is paid to a Fairtrade premium fund that supports social and environmental community projects. El Guabo, one of the farmer cooperatives that Equal Exchange partners with, received \$143,967 in premium dollars from US purchases alone in 2009. The 430 small-scale farmers that make up el Guabo vote on how the funds are spent in their community. El Guabo members have decided to invest the social premium in health clinics, local schools, business development and environmental projects amongst many other things.*

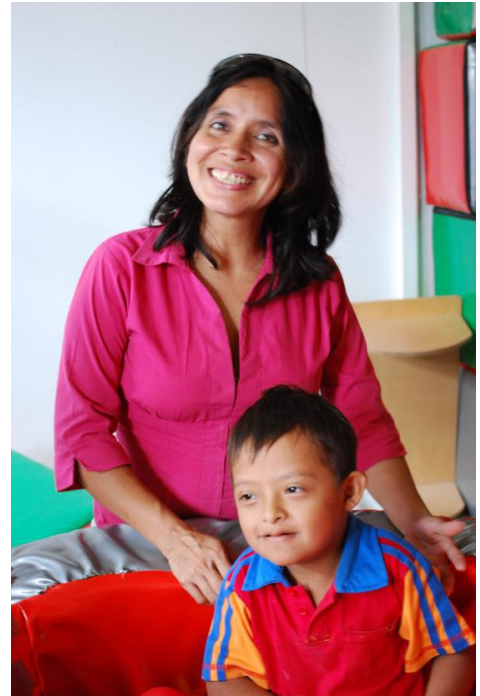
### Education

The premium helps fund 16 primary school teachers and a special needs school. These schools are located in areas where producers and workers of El Guabo live and where their children attend. Each year El Guabo provides each child of the producers, workers, and administrative staff a backpack and a \$35 fund to purchase school supplies. Last year the schools supplies and backpacks were distributed to the children of 371 workers, 441 producers and 56 employees.



## El Guabo Special Needs School

Therapist Maribel (*pictured*) is one of the teachers at a special needs school, funded by the Fairtrade premium. She takes students like Miguel (*pictured*) through language and physical therapy sessions as well as normal classes and gives these kids an opportunity to learn and participate in local life. Prior to the school being established it was difficult for kids such as Miguel to get the care they needed. Local schools were mostly unable to cater to the special needs of these children. Sadly, without adequate resources for education, many of these children were left uneducated, dependent and stuck at home. In Ecuador, 80% of parents with special needs children live in poverty. The establishment of the school, founded in 2000, provided a much needed support network for local families. It currently teaches 35 full time students with many others coming in for a variety of special therapy sessions.



## Health

The El Guabo Association of Small Banana Producers (El Guabo ASBP) Medical Center was established to ensure that every family belonging to the

Association, be they farmers or their relatives and children, are able to get good medical care when they need it. The service is available 24 hours a day all year round and is financed by the Fairtrade premium. The center is staffed with 5 health care professionals. In 2009, the health center saw 7,084 patients. The clinic deals with most of the usual community medical



ailments - maternity, young mother and childcare as well as tropical diseases common to the region. A dedicated respiratory specialist, Dr Daisy (*pictured*), is funded by the premium, dealing with children and adults with respiratory problems like asthma. Respiratory illnesses, poisoning and severe skin irritation caused by exposure to pesticides used to be prevalent in the area but Dr Daisy observes that since the farms have converted to Fairtrade and more sustainable environmental practices these problems have dissipated.

## Medical Insurance

Although access to health care in Ecuador is 'universal', national health care services are underfunded and over stretched. In addition, there are still high fees for treatment, which can leave families in debt for years. An abundance of private health clinics were established to improve care, but are only available to those who can afford private medical insurance. For the farmers who live too far from health clinics to benefit from private health insurance, funds have been allocated to create preventative and curative health programs in their communities.

## Environment

Above and beyond the rigorous environmental standards set out in the Fairtrade certification, El Guabo banana farmers are always looking for ways to make their farms more sustainable. One such project is now being funded by the El Guabo's Fairtrade premium.

When local chicken farmers were asked by the Government to clean up their act and find a sustainable use for tons of chicken waste. El Guabo farmers put their hands up. El Guabo picks up the unwanted poop at the chicken farm, lets it dry, then they put it in bags as



compost. Chicken poop makes an ideal low cost, sustainable and completely organic fertilizer. Fertilization is one of the most limiting factors in the production system of small farmers. Fertilizer is expensive and organic fertilizer even more so (about 3 times more expensive). With this project, funded by the Fairtrade premium, El Guabo may be able to make adequate, organic fertilization feasible for less than the costs of the synthetic equivalents for small farmers and it is organic! It's also a great way of helping other local companies and improving the sustainability of the community. By-products from other local farms are also used for organic fertilizer - nothing goes to waste including harvested and processed coca, (coffee) rice grasses, ash and local soil. All the ingredients are mixed together to compost further then allowed to dry. In five weeks it is ready to be distributed to all the El Guabo farmers.



# Business Development

Twenty percent of the premium funds are spent on business development and infrastructure improvement projects to empower local farmers. Projects include improving access to credit, leadership development, and collective access to farm equipment. One such project looks at precision agriculture. El Guabo is currently developing a 60-acre organic, communal farm that will experiment with precision agriculture techniques. This new system will allow for better timing of harvest and will take advantage of advanced soil science to create more efficient and ecological agricultural practices.

**EVERY TIME YOU BUY A BUNCH OF EQUAL EXCHANGE BANANAS YOU'RE HELPING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF EVERYONE IN THE EL GUABO COMMUNITY.**

