



# Volunteer

## Vocation and Missionary Movement

by Fr Juan Cárdenas, sdb

Rafael Correa, the current President of the Republic, is one of the more than 2000 young people who in their earlier years left home for a year for experience as a Salesian volunteer in the mountainous Cordillera de los Andes region at Zumbahua, an indigenous community and mission station 3,500 metres up.

Gabriela Jiménez, after a formation process was sent to the Ecuadorian jungle to share the Salesian spirit with the indigenous Achuar at the Wasakentsa mission.

The Salesian volunteer movement in Ecuador, involving a full year of service, began in 1971. Four decades later it has

undergone a process of evolution and consolidation as an opportunity for social commitment for young people. Since 1980 FMA communities have opened their doors to take in young female volunteers and now take part in a joint effort with their Salesian confreres. Somewhat later, in the 1990s, the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary came in on the scheme and set up a formation process known in Spanish as JUVOMI - *Juvenil* (Youthful), *Vocacional* (Vocational), *Misionero* (Missionary). The volunteer movement envisages three stages, a 'before' (pre-volunteer), a 'during' (the actual time as a volunteer) and an 'afterwards' ("volunteers forever" or VPS in its Spanish acronym). Most of the young volun-

teers come from Salesian communities and their works.

The volunteer movement now has a strong social, church and vocational component.

- » volunteer activity is presented as an opportunity for citizen involvement with a view to strengthening the social fabric, solidarity and democracy.
- » young volunteers are sent to 40 Salesian communities and 8 female religious communities which are not Salesian but are in the local church. Here they work in close collaboration and develop a true sense of Church.

