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POLICY RESEARCH WORKING PAPER

Rural Poverty in Ecuador — A Qualitative Assessment

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This report aims to assess what poverty means to marginalized rural families, what kind of survival strategies families use in times of hardship, and what these families believe is needed to alleviate their poverty. The rural families express very practical solutions to overcoming poverty, largely linked to increasing the productivity of human resources and land through training and small-scale infrastructure investments.

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Summary findings

A complement to recent in-depth quantitative analyses of rural poverty in Ecuador, this is a report on the results of the Rural Qualitative Assessment of living conditions in rural communities in all three of Ecuador's diverse regions.

Using a variety of qualitative techniques, the research aimed to assess what poverty means to marginalized rural families, what kind of survival strategies families use in times of hardship, and what these families believe is needed to alleviate poverty. Several key messages emerge:

- Rural communities with the same characteristics (such as area, soil quality, and ethnic background) are actually very heterogeneous in their command of land resources, definition of well-being, range of economic activities, and recommendations for what is needed to overcome poverty.
- In times of hardship, families have complemented income from traditional sources (such as subsistence

agriculture and small animal husbandry) with earnings from new activities. In addition to migration, which plays a pivotal role in all communities, piecework and weaving are important to income generation in the Sierra, small businesses are important in the Costa, and increased production of cash crops is important in the Oriente. Families have also reduced expenditures on clothing, fiestas, and food. Spending less on food is alarming as malnutrition rates in rural Ecuador are already very high.

- Poor rural families express very practical solutions to overcoming poverty. They don't demand sweeping changes, such as expropriation of land from large farmers. Overwhelmingly, they suggest measures that will make available land and human resources more productive. Almost half the suggestions from poor rural families have to do with infrastructure. Many families also want training courses (both agricultural and nonagricultural).

This paper — a product of the Country Operations Division 1, Latin America and the Caribbean, Country Department III — is part of a larger effort in the department to combine qualitative and quantitative analysis into economic and sector work. Copies of the paper are available free from the World Bank, 1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433. Please contact Elena Rodriguez, room IS-059, telephone 202-473-7873, fax 202-334-0113, Internet address erodriguez@worldbank.org. February 1996. (37 pages)

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1. Introduction

With the Ecuador Rural Qualitative Assessment (RQA), we tried to learn about the views of rural households on poverty.² The World Bank started in April of 1994 a Poverty Assessment for Ecuador (World Bank 1995) and one of its main objectives was to examine the causes of poverty in rural and urban areas. As part of this poverty analysis, we wanted to complement statistical analysis from household surveys with qualitative information on how households themselves view their living conditions. Little such information exists for rural areas so that we concentrated the qualitative assessment on poverty in rural Ecuador.

The Rural Qualitative Assessment has three main objectives with which the rural analysis under the Poverty Assessment is complemented: First, it aims to assess what poverty means to marginalized rural families. Second, it tries to determine what kind of survival strategies families employ in times of hardship. Third, it strives to learn what these households believe is necessary to alleviate poverty.

Several key messages evolve from the Rural Qualitative Assessment presented in this Paper.

- First, rural communities with the same characteristics like area, soil quality and ethnic background are actually very heterogeneous. This holds with respect to their command of land resources, definition of well-being, the range of economic activities carried out in the communities and their recommendations for what is necessary to overcome poverty
- Second, almost all families interviewed state that the recent years have been very hard for them and they have increasingly complemented income from traditional sources (like subsistence agriculture and small animal husbandry) with earnings from new activities. Besides migration, which plays a pivotal role in all communities, piecework and weaving in the Sierra, small businesses in the Costa and increased cash crop production in the Oriente have taken their role in income generation. Families have also reduced expenditures for clothing, fiestas and food -- the latter being quite alarming as malnutrition rates in rural Ecuador are already very high.
- Third, poor rural families express very practical solutions to overcome their poverty. Demands are not directed at sweeping changes like expropriation of large farmers.

¹ World Bank, the George Washington University Center for International Health, and international consultant, respectively.

² We especially want to thank the Ecuadoran reserach teams for their excellent field work. They were comprised of Carlos Arcos, Silvia Arguello, Monica Baez, Maria Gloria Barreiro, Fernando Garcia, Rosario Jacome, Nelson Nartinez, Hugo Vinueza. We gratefully acknowledge financing for the Ecuador Rural Qualitative Assessment by the Government of the Netherlands.

Families overwhelmingly suggest measures which will increase the productivity of available land and human resources. Almost half of the recommendations are related to infrastructure and a very high share also demanded agricultural and non-agricultural training courses.

This paper, based on case studies conducted in May 1994 in seven rural communities, is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a short background on rural life in Ecuador's three diverse regions. In Section 3, we present the research objectives, the design, and methodology of the qualitative assessment. Section 4 contains community descriptions. Location and population, the employment pattern, basic service access or community organization are some of the characteristics we look at. Sections 5 to 7 then portrait the results of the assessment: Section 5 describes the perceptions of households regarding the underlying causes of their poverty; Section 6 focuses on the specific strategies that these households employ in order to survive and Section 7 presents the household members' recommendations for actions that could be undertaken to alleviate rural poverty. We conclude with a short summary.

After the fieldwork of the Rural Qualitative Assessment had been undertaken, UNICEF Ecuador commissioned a second round of qualitative assessments in six Sierra communities to complement the analysis and examine whether the findings of the initial community studies were confirmed. We summarize the results of these additional community assessments, which confirm the conclusions of the Rural Qualitative Assessment, in an Addendum to this paper.

2. Living Conditions in Rural Ecuador

This section discusses two aspects of living conditions in rural Ecuador: rural heterogeneity and access to productive resources.

2.1. Rural Heterogeneity

Ecuador is indeed a country of contrasts; its heterogeneity is expressed in ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural terms not only between and within disparate areas of the country, but even within a given community.

Inter-regional heterogeneity. Ecuador's regional division in the Costa (coastal lowlands), Sierra (highlands) and the Oriente (upper Amazon basin) manifest themselves in three distinct rural structures. Since the colonial period, the predominant feature in the *Sierra* has been the bifurcated hacienda-minifundia system. Before agrarian reform in the early 1960s, the system was based on the monopoly of land and the imposition of obligatory labor services, but it subsequently experienced substantial change that revolved around the evolution of modern dairy farms and independent peasant communities. In the past decade, the nontraditional agricultural export (NTAE) sector has developed producing products such as cut flowers which provide part of the growing off-farm rural employment in the region. Other off-farm employment possibilities in the rural Sierra are textile, shoe or hat production which take place with simple machinery within the household boundary.

Development in the *Costa* began in the mid-19th century, and was based on export-oriented plantation agriculture, where wage labor systems evolved alongside commercially oriented small-

and medium-scale farms. One consequence of this process was the development of intermediate cities and transportation networks dedicated to facilitating the export of traditional crops such as coffee, cacao, and since 1948, bananas. The Costa has been the engine of growth of the Ecuadoran economy for the past ten years as real economic activity expanded on average by 5 per cent, largely due to a primary export market boom for shrimps, and to a lesser extent, for bananas.

Economic activity in the *Oriente* consists of resource extraction and small-scale agriculture by the indigenous and migrant population. Extractive activities (e.g., gold and rubber) have been carried out since the colonial period. The region remains relatively isolated, however, because of poor roads and difficult terrain. Since the early 1970s, the defining elements of development in the region have been the petroleum boom and settlement of migrants which have had the effect of accelerating the production of coffee, wood, citrus crops and beef cattle not only by the settlers but also by the indigenous inhabitants.

Over-exploitation of fragile tropical resources is threatening the Amazon rainforest. The incorporation of the region into the national socioeconomic and political system has obliged the indigenous population to abandon traditional and sustainable, rotational horticulture and, like mestizo colonizers, to settle on fixed landholdings provided for in colonization legislation. On these holdings, indigenous households now grow market crops such as coffee in the tropical region, and naranjilla in the subtropical cloud forest region. To a large degree, this process has initiated a vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation, characterized by deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution.

The regional heterogeneity is further enhanced by ethnic factors. While there is no general agreement on the precise definition of ethnic boundaries, many Sierra and Oriente communities can be characterized as indigenous by any measure. Ethnic identity is based on many cultural factors, including community, nuclear and extended family relationships, which are reinforced by language, dress, and sets of common norms and values. Racial discrimination has historically excluded the indigenous population from the political arena.³

Intra-regional heterogeneity. The case studies included in the Rural Qualitative Assessment illustrate the considerable heterogeneity among apparently similar rural communities even within regions, especially in the Sierra. Historically, some communities obtained access to more or better resources than others through agrarian reform or purchase. Some communities have also started to diversify their economic activity, e.g. textile production. Further, development projects of the national government, often funded by international or bilateral donor organizations, have improved the access of a number of communities to basic services but by far not all. In sum, almost neighboring communities can exhibit considerable differences in living standards and type of economic activities.

Intra-community heterogeneity. Although we conducted the RQA in only a few communities, we observed that living standards and the distribution of income within the same community can vary significantly between households. For example, in Jatun Era, a community in

³ Annex 1 to this Working Paper provides a short overview of the different forms of indigenous organizations.

the province of Cotopaxi, some families live in simple one room shacks made of grass and clay while others occupy relatively modern brick or cement houses with electricity, water and separate latrine facilities. Similarly, the distribution of land and its quality is strikingly unequal in Jatun Era.

This intra-community heterogeneity may result from unequal access to land or may be related to the family cycle. Certain families may dominate (both economically and politically) because of particularly favorable access to productive land or for their capacity to generate income from small businesses. A second source of differentiation within the community is related to the family cycle. Frequently, young people lack access to land, while their elders retain uncultivated land because grown children have left the household or as a result of widowhood. In this sense, intra-community stratification based on landownership is not necessarily permanent, but may, rather, have a cyclical component. The effects of inequality based on family cycles can, in some cases, be offset by forms of organization (as observed, for instance, in indigenous communities in the Sierra) that provide for the exchange of resources (e.g., land for labor). We will revisit this point later on.

2.2. *Poverty and Productive Resources: Land, Credit and Market Access*

For many rural households, access to land, water and credit is limited which can lead to a vicious circle of poverty and soil destruction. Almost all rural households try to complement income from agricultural activities, which remains the most important income source for almost all families, with other earnings. But if the household is not very successful in obtaining other incomes, the pressure on maximizing agricultural production in the short run increases. Due to an increase in land pressure and stagnant productivity, smallholders then replace traditional, sustainable cultivation techniques with more intensive alternatives that increase the likelihood of soil exhaustion and erosion. Consequently, smallholders enter a vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation that is essentially based on inadequate access to land and other productive resources.

Land. Land ownership in Ecuador has been highly concentrated since the colonial period, and unequal distribution continues to the present day. The agrarian reform process resulted in the gradual transfer of relatively small proportions of agricultural and pasture land to indigenous and peasant communities, which generally received the most unproductive and fragile lands. In particular, small land holdings in the Sierra are frequently so steeply sloped that even the most meticulous stewardship can not maintain soil fertility indefinitely, so that in many communities, soil erosion has reached alarming levels. While smallholdings undergo constant subdivision because of demographic pressure and inheritance patterns,⁴ large holdings have been consolidated. As shown in World Bank (1995), the Gini coefficient of land distribution stayed relatively constant between 1954 and 1994. While the modern hacienda is more capital intensive and somewhat more compact

⁴ The only two national agricultural censuses conducted in Ecuador reveal that the average size of the minifundia (holding of less than five hectares) decreased from 1.71 hectares to 1.54 hectares between 1954 and 1974.

than in the pre-reform period, it continues to control access to land, and in addition, occupies the most productive areas.

If households do not possess pasture land, domestic animals, which are a central features of farming systems, cannot be kept. Domestic animals are a central feature of farming systems in that they both depend upon and support crop production. The possession of animals allows for the diversification of income (not only from live animals, but also from by-products, such as meat, wool, milk, eggs, and cheese). In addition, animals represent a source of savings, which can be utilized in times of emergency or special need. If households don't own or cannot use pasture land, they are limited to holding small animals like sheep, pigs, and chickens which are kept in or around the house. In the Sierra, guinea pigs are kept in the house, and represent as much a ritual good as a food resource.

Credit. Poor rural households who seek credit do so in the informal sector, where interest rates are high, but where conditions are flexible. Public credit schemes by the Banco Nacional de Fomento (BNF) have traditionally been benefiting the medium- and large-scale farmers.⁵ While probably more important than the public sector, the role of private financial institutions to lend to small-scale farmers has also been limited for several reasons. First, the lack of collateral is nearly universal, because many small landholdings are not titled and even when they are, their value is very low. Second, many small-scale farmers lack information on credit and face serious cultural barriers to seeking loans.⁶ Third, small-scale farmers often require very small amounts of capital (usually less than \$2,000 and frequently as little as \$100) and flexible terms that banks are often not equipped to cope with. Nevertheless, a few pioneering private financial institutions of the formal sector have started to reach out to small and poor farmers and supply tailor-made credits.

Market Access. In Ecuador, the capacity of the rural household and community to provide for the sustenance of their members also depends on the degree to which they are linked to or isolated from markets (World Bank 1995). This factor can be understood in terms of distance to regional and national urban centers, the quality of feeder roads, access to agricultural extension and marketing experience. The distances and the difficulties in bringing goods to market further erode the terms of trade for rural inhabitants because they must sell to intermediaries. At the same time, the cost of purchased items, including clothing, food, agricultural inputs, and medicines, is higher than in less isolated areas.

3. Research Design, Methodology, and Data Analysis

In this section, we shortly revisit the design and methodology employed for the Rural Qualitative Assessment.

Study design. Two Non-Governmental Organizations conducted the field work for the Rural Qualitative Assessment in seven small rural communities in May 1994. Both NGOs, the

⁵ See World Bank (1993), Annex 2, p.9.

⁶ As reported in World Bank (1995), only about half of all farms with up to 30 hectares are properly titled.

'Centro Ecuatoriano de Servicios Agrícolas' (CESA) and 'Desarrollo y Autogestión' (DyA) had conducted qualitative research before and had ample experience in working with rural communities. The NGOs formed three research teams which each stayed one week in one community. Four of the communities are located in the Sierra (Chimborazo and Cotopaxi provinces), two in the Costa (Manabi) and one in the Oriente (Napo). All communities are located in cantons which are classified as very poor -- by a variety of different indicators -- in the Poverty Map by the Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo.⁷ None of the communities is close to an urban center. While the NGOs had substantial experience working with the population in the region of the selected communities, they had not worked directly with the communities selected. This served to avoid a bias between the village population and the research teams.⁸

Methodology. The field methodology employed in the RQA was based on the technique of triangulation, where qualitative and quantitative information is gathered from several sources, using different methods of data collection. The principle advantage of the technique is that it permits for cross-checking and validation.

We obtained information from four sources. First, key informant interviews were conducted with community leaders and others (e.g., school teachers and rural physicians), familiar with the principle trends and tendencies present at the local level. Second, the researchers conducted semi-structured, household-level interviews with men and women in each community, following a thematic interview guide that was developed in a training workshop. The research teams tested the content and length of the interview guide in the first week of fieldwork, and minor changes were made in a follow-up review meeting. Third, focus groups discussed the general themes addressed in the assessment. These discussions generally started with both men and women, and then divided into separate groups on the basis of gender. This strategy was particularly useful, because these discussions showed that men and women perceive of poverty in somewhat different terms, and that they emphasize different elements of the survival strategies employed by their households. Finally, researchers made direct observations of household facilities and community infrastructure. This step provided information on access to basic services, types of building materials, presence of durable consumer goods, and agricultural production patterns.

Representativeness. The seven communities do not suffice to achieve representativeness on the national or regional level but we examined a large percentage of households within each community.⁹ We are not able to estimate levels of statistical significance within the communities because we did not employ random selection procedures. Therefore, it can not be known whether the cases selected for interview are strictly representative of the communities or not. But the methodology employed does provide reasonable certainty that the characteristics of the selected households reflect those at the community level. Specific households were not purposely selected

⁷ CONADE (1993).

⁸ By profession, team members included anthropologists and sociologists, a nutritionist, and an agronomist.

⁹ In total, NGO staff conducted 176 interviews in the seven communities of which 92 were women and 84 men.

according to previously established criteria, and the number of interviews conducted within each community was large enough to permit extrapolation to the community (but not regional or national) level.

Community approach. It is important to note that the research teams obtained community support before field work commenced. Research teams spent at least the first day in each community with local leaders in order to explain the objectives and methodology of the analysis, and when appropriate, the community was offered a formal presentation of the results of the field work.

Data processing. Field information was processed in three steps. First, notes were taken during the conversations after permission was obtained. Second, hand-written summaries were prepared each day. Third, the summaries were computer-processed using a pre-defined standard text-file shell, and were accompanied by information about each household. Summaries of group discussions were similarly entered into the data base.

The next step consisted of tabulating the answers for most individual sub-themes at the community level. This task was simplified by the relatively small range of responses to each question; in cases where the range was greater, answers were classified according to their underlying content. We applied two methods to quantify the qualitative data. First, we used person-based (instead of frequency-of-answer-based) aggregation for those cases where community members gave varying numbers of answers to a question. For these questions (i.e. what the most important obstacles to better life was for a family) we standardized the weight of each answer so that they total to one per person. Second, if the respondents supplied an explicit ranking in their answer (i.e. "*the most important obstacle is access to land; less important, is that we have only few animals*"), we took this ranking into account by giving the first option a higher weight than the second.

4. The Communities

4.1 Community Characteristics

Table 1 presents an overview of the seven communities in order to provide a backdrop for the perceptions expressed by their residents. The first panel presents data on basic characteristics (region, ethnicity, and size), access to health care (in terms of the presence or absence of a health center), and access to basic services (potable water system, electricity, and latrines). The second panel summarizes the household activities employed in the communities (agriculture, labor migration, commercial activities, and handicraft production). The third panel adds an educational profile of one community in each region.

Four general tendencies can be observed. First, regional location in this study is coterminous with ethnicity: the Sierra and Oriente communities are inhabited by indigenous households, while the residents of the coastal communities are mestizos. Second, the coastal communities are much larger than in the other two regions. While the tables do not reflect it, these communities are also much more complex in terms of economic and social infrastructure. Third, nearly all of the households secure their sustenance through agricultural production but migration (either permanent or temporary) plays an important role for income earning, too. Fourth, almost

all primary school age children attend school. Their work responsibility in the household or on the field does hence not exclude school attendance. In contrast, large proportions of adults (particularly those over 60 years of age) never attended school.

4.2. *The Sierra Communities*

The clearest general characteristic of the four Sierra communities is that their households possess few resources. These communities are strictly indigenous in terms of the presence of shared cultural elements (e.g., use of the Quechua language), as well as organization at the intra- and inter-household levels. They are also remote and isolated; roads are treacherous and public transportation is usually available only on market days (once or twice weekly).

Except for primary schools, there are virtually no public services in these communities, and while potable water, electricity, and latrines are present in some cases, they are always rudimentary. Local, independent water systems are generally built by residents with the assistance of public or private development agencies, and consist of a catchment system, holding tank, and pipeline to each house. Typically, each residence has a single tap in the front yard. Latrines are sometimes constructed when water systems are installed. As is true for water systems, the installation of electricity is paid for by the community. The service is usually limited to no more than one or two lights in each house.

Table 1. Characteristics of Seven Case-Study Communities

A. General Characteristics and Access to Basic Needs

Community	Region	Ethnicity	Popu- lation	Health Center	Percent of households with:		
					Potable Water	Electri- city	Latrines
Melan	Sierra	Indigenous	255	No	70	70	0
Jatun Era	Sierra	Indigenous	259	No	95	95	95
Maca Chico	Sierra	Indigenous	557	No	87	90	100
Apunag	Sierra	Indigenous	378	No	95	0	98
Bellavista	Coast	Mestizo	1200	Yes	70	90	97
Membrillal	Coast	Mestizo	1240	Yes	0	90	83
Villano	Oriente	Indigenous	352	No	0	0	0

Source: Field Interviews of Rural Qualitative Assessment (1995).

B. Economic Activities

Percent households working in:

Community	Agriculture	Migration	Commerce/handicrafts
Melan	100	55	15
Jatun Era	100	20	10
Maca Chico	90	53	20
Apunag	100	0	0
Bellavista	59	46	8
Membrillal	96	80	0
Villano	100	0	0

Source: Field Interviews of Rural Qualitative Assessment (1995).

C. Educational profile of three communities.

Community	Percent of children ¹ in school	Adult ² educational levels (%)			
		None	Primary	High school	High school graduation
Membrillal	96.4	21.5	64.5	10.8	3.2
Melan	100.0	40.4	57.4	2.1	0.0
Villano	100.0	14.3	65.5	13.1	8.3

¹ Age 8 to 12.

² Age > 15.

Source: Field Interviews of Rural Qualitative Assessment (1995).

In terms of housing, most families continue to live in traditional *chozas*, which have dirt floors, adobe walls, and straw roofs. Only recently has this type of construction begun to be supplanted by cement block walls and zinc roofs.

Virtually all young children attend primary school, but secondary school attendance is extremely rare. Rates of functional adult illiteracy range from 70 percent to 78 percent, and tends to be higher for women and, in particularly, the elderly. There are no health centers in any of the communities, and health care can only be obtained (when transportation is available) in towns that may be several hours away.

Table 1 also shows that virtually all households depend primarily on agriculture. Corn, barley, and potatoes are the basic subsistence crops in the Sierra; potatoes are the most common market crop. Secondary crops include onions, beans, quinoa, broad beans (*habas*), lentils, and native tubers (*ocas*, *mellocos*, *mashua*). The farming system combines the production of these crops using shifting sets of techniques, including rotation and intercultivation, with small animal husbandry (sheep, pigs, chickens, and guinea pigs). Labor responsibilities are commonly divided on the basis of age and sex, and may include exchanges within extended families and communities.

Because access to land is so limited, agricultural production alone (whether for consumption or sale) can not sustain the family, and other income must be obtained. The most frequently used mechanism is off-farm employment, and in these communities, up to 55 percent of households include temporary migration in their survival strategies. Handicraft production and commercial activities are also important mechanisms for supplementing household income.

Melan. The indigenous community of Melan is situated in the southern part of Chimborazo province at between 2,300 and 3,600 meters above sea level. The community is very remote, and is reached by traveling south from the market towns of Licto or Chambo for one and a half to two and a half hours on poor dirt roads. While 70 percent of households have access to a potable water system and to electricity, none possess latrines.

Landholdings in Melan range from only 1/4 to two hectares of steeply sloped, non-irrigated land. The best land and the largest landholdings in Melan are owned by persons from the neighboring community of Alao who married inhabitants from Melan, thus acquiring land there. One fourth of the households have purchased an average of two additional hectares of paramo (high Andean meadows), where they graze small numbers of horses and cows. Of 49 families in Mela, twelve own pasturage and keep large animals (1-2 cows, horses, burros). Typical households own on average five sheep, three pigs and 5-15 guinea pigs. Subsistence production is supplemented by the sale of onions, potatoes, and the occasional small domestic animal. Given their limited access to land, members of over half of households migrate temporarily, usually to work in the informal construction sector in Quito. Consequently, women must assume much of the responsibility for household production, and even very young children must help out in the house and fields.

Apunag. Like Melan, the village of Apunag is reached by traveling along small roads south from Chimborazo's capital of Riobamba. Connection to Riobamba and the local center of Licto has recently improved with the completion of a road linking its neighboring community El Etén. Nevertheless, travel still takes several hours. Before, the entire distance was covered on foot or by mule, damaging crops in the process which resulted in lower prices for the produce of the families.

The small primary school lacks resources, and this community has the highest rate of adult illiteracy among the seven included in the RQA. While nearly all households are connected to the potable water system and have latrines, no household has electricity but installation has started.

Household parcels are small (averaging no more than two to three hectares), and they are highly eroded, because they are steeply sloped and their owners use them intensively. Agriculture is carried out primarily to satisfy subsistence needs, but small surpluses are sporadically sold. The average household has three pigs and ten sheep, rabbits and guinea pigs. Household income is supplemented by temporary migration, which provides on average the equivalent of US\$50 per month during part of the year.

Box 1: Family Case Study 1: Maca Chico¹⁰

Angel, age 31, lives with his wife Maria Angelina (29) and their four children, Blanca (9), Veronica (8), Nancy (6), and Luis (5 months) in Maca Chico, in the province of Cotopaxi. Angel and Maria are somewhat unusual in their community because they both finished primary school. They live in a small house constructed of cement block with a tile roof. Their's is newer than that of their neighbors, some of whom live in the more traditional house of adobe walls and straw roof. They have a faucet in the front yard, but no electricity or latrine. Meals are cooked in a fireplace, but when the family is in a hurry, they use the small gas stove. The only other substantial consumer goods the family possesses is a treadle sewing machine and an old bicycle.

On their small plot of steeply sloped land that was received from Angel's father, the family grows (not necessarily in the same cropping cycle) corn, potatoes, beans, chochos (a leguminous bean), lentils, quinoa, barley, heat, onions, and two Andean tubers: oca and mashua. The family consumes most of what they produce, but they sometimes sell small quantities of corn, potatoes, chochos, and lentils. They also have three cows, three pigs, four rabbits and, inside the house, six guinea pigs. The animals are raised for sale.

Because the sale of crops and animals does not earn enough to cover the family's expenses, Angel works for two weeks at a time as a mason in Quito. He does not have a contract, though, and must obtain a new job each time he goes to the city. His wages are low, partly because there are so many other fellow *campesinos* also looking for work. Sometimes, Angel is not lucky, and he must return home empty-handed. If he becomes ill or is injured, he can not work, and must pay his own expenses. If he is fortunate, on the other hand, he can earn as much as \$30 a week, and if he is careful, he can save half of that amount.

Maria Angelina used to work in a neighboring town taking care of a businessman's animals, but now that the family has grown and Angel goes to Quito, she is primarily responsible for taking care of the crops and animals. Blanca and Veronica both go to school, but only during the morning. Before they leave and after they get home, they take care of the animals and little Luis.

With their limited income, the family has a hard time earning enough to cover their expenses. They have attempted to reduce their expenditures on food to offset increasing prices; the only food items they buy are rice, noodles, salt, vegetable shortening, and oats; these are combined with the food crops they grow. They almost never consume meat, milk, fresh vegetables, or fruit. Everything they must buy is getting more expensive; for instance, although schooling is free, they must spend four dollars on each daughter for pencils, pens, notebooks, and the like, as well as 10 dollars for their uniforms and three dollars for shoes. Likewise, the cost of health care has gone up so much that home remedies are usually used. When there is not enough money, Angel's parents lend them 15 or 20 dollars without interest.

For Angel and Maria Angelina, poverty is a result of disorganization at the community level and at the household level, the lack of land and sufficient income. Their situation has worsened progressively since the early 1980s. For them, the only solution for poor families is temporary labor migration.

¹⁰

This case study, and the two that follow, are based on information given by specific households. They are not composites. Quotations included in the text on different topics were drawn from interviews conducted in the communities mentioned.

Jatun Era. Of the four Sierra communities, the situation of Jatun Era appears to be the most favorable. It is somewhat less remote than the others, and almost all households have access to basic services: potable water, latrines, and electricity. It has a primary school but no health care facility.¹¹

In quantitative terms, access to land is adequate by Sierra standards. Most households own between five and ten hectares which is greater than in other communities because families who had worked at a nearby hacienda were able to purchase land from the hacienda. At present, households can not only provide for most of their own subsistence needs, but also produce a surplus for market.

Because landholdings can generally provide for family sustenance in Jatun Era, few heads of households migrate, and in only one fifth of households, younger males seek off-farm employment. Nevertheless, the productive quality of the land is limited by its elevation, topography and absence of irrigation water. In the future, this factor is likely to combine with impending subdivision of the holdings to constrain the relative well-being of the community.

Maca Chico. A large ravine bisects Maca Chico. It is difficult (and at times impossible) to cross this ravine, so that some school children find it easiest to attend school in a neighboring village, and undoubtedly, community integration suffers for the same reason. While most households have access to potable water and electricity, none have latrines, and, as in the other Sierra communities included in the RQA, health care must be obtained in the nearest town.

Maca Chico, which is the largest of the four Sierra communities, also has the clearest signs of stratification based on landownership. While a few households own around six hectares, and can therefore probably produce surpluses, others own around three hectares, and can therefore barely cover their subsistence requirements. Finally, a larger group has access to less than one hectare, which is not enough to produce enough for market or for subsistence. Consequently, members of more than half of households participate in temporary migration, while 20 percent obtain additional income from handicraft production or commercial activities, usually as tailors. For all households of Maca Chico, then, landownership is the defining characteristic of poverty.

4.3. The Coastal Communities

Several characteristics of the two coastal communities included in the Rural Qualitative Assessment stand out in Table 1. First, it can be seen that they are both two to three times the size of the Sierra communities. Second, they are both inhabited by non-indigenous (mestizo) families. Third, while access to public services is somewhat better than in the Sierra (both communities have a health center), the proportion of families with access to potable water is not higher. On average, these households have more consumer durables than their Sierra counterparts: most have stoves and refrigerators, and many also own televisions and stereos.

¹¹ *"Things are a little better now because ... we have land and animals, even though there are changes from year to year. Some years are better, in other years, you recuperate. Sometimes, there is extra work".* (household interview #1, Jatun Era).

Fourth, many families engage in a variety of commercial activities besides their agricultural work. And many families receive remittances from family members who have moved on a more or less permanent basis to Guayaquil.

Membrillal. This mestizo community is situated in a transition zone between the dry *sabana* lowlands and the more humid Chongon-Colonche coastal range. The majority of the inhabitants belong to one of eight families, and many households are subdivided -- 63 per cent of the families have members who have moved permanently to urban centers, particularly Guayaquil. Membrillal actually consists of five populated centers; Membrillal Centro, which was selected for inclusion in the RQA, is the parroquia (parish) center. As such, it is the location of the community's church, school, civil registry, health subcenter, and community meeting hall. Traditionally, the area around Membrillal has produced coffee, but declining prices have led to the abandonment of substantial areas of land.

Box 2: Family Case Study 2: Membrillal

Tomas (58) and Carmen (47) have 13 children, of whom 10, ranging in age from six to 21, still live with them. The other three have married, and one of them lives in Guayaquil. They live in a small house elevated above the ground on stilts; it has plank floors, bamboo walls, and a roof of corrugated zinc. They have a single water faucet in front of the house and they also have electricity. They are currently digging a latrine behind the house, and garbage is disposed of by throwing it in the nearby river. Tomas and Carmen both left school after the second grade, but they believe that education is important; all of the children from six to 16 are in school, while Roberto (21) and Alejandro (19), who now help with the farm work, both finished primary school.

Tomas is primarily a farmer; he owns only a hectare and a half, though, and because the land is so dry, he can grow very little. He is always in search of ways to earn additional income. His major source of income is coffee, but productivity is low, and prices have dropped consistently for the past three years. This year, he and Roberto went to the Oriente to work for a friend for six weeks. While Carmen considers herself to be a housewife, she harvests coffee in nearby plantations every June and July; this year three of her daughters accompanied her. Many of their neighbors own small businesses, especially shops, but Tomas and Carmen do not have time for that. Also, many neighbors produce charcoal for local markets, but Tomas does not have enough land to be able to cultivate the necessary trees or brush.

Besides buying nearly all of the food the family needs, Tomas and Carmen have a series of other expenses. For instance, they spent roughly US\$100 to equip seven children for school. For them, poverty is a product of insufficient land and the unavailability of wage labor. One of the ways that they adjust to their situation is by consuming less food. Health care is another area of concern; if extra money is needed, the community has a fund that was by the parish priest from church offerings. Illnesses are usually treated at the public health center. However, there is a new young doctor every year, and the center has no equipment. Treatment is supposed to be free, as are the medicines, but usually, Tomas must purchase these in the local pharmacy.

Tomas belongs to a community church group, but he is not affiliated with either of the two local farmer groups. He believes that every family solves its own problems; he says that "*what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours; people (in this community) are very stingy.*" Because there are insufficient sources of employment, and since the community is so disorganized, Tomas thinks that the best way for households to deal with their poverty is by obtaining credit for raising small animals and cattle.

The community is relatively well endowed with basic infrastructure and families own some luxury goods. Most primary school children attend the public school, but a private school was initiated as a response to the poor quality of the public education; nevertheless, even its modest cost is beyond the reach of most families. There is a high school, but it has very few students, and does not cover the final two years. Most households have electricity and latrines, but the water supply comes from a series of wells, and is not potable. The health subcenter has few equipment or supplies and is attended by a rural doctor who is not available on weekends or holidays. In order to feed the doctor, a health financing committee was organized which charges 500 sucres per consultation (about US\$0.25). In Membrillal, most families have radios and many have sewing machines; a minority has televisions and stereos.

Agricultural production and transfers from family members living in the cities are the most important sources of income for the families. Households with access to land at higher elevations are able to grow coffee and cacao, otherwise production includes plantain, avocado, lemons, corn, beans, and melons. Only a few single-parent households do not participate in agriculture, but virtually all farm families have additional income, which is obtained from family members (usually grown children) who have moved to Guayaquil, or temporary migration to the coffee plantations, or from a variety of commercial activities. The most common of these is the production of charcoal, which is recognized to be a short-term, non-sustainable strategy because it is based on increasing deforestation, which is likely to worsen the already poor quality of local soils. Other remunerative activities include small stores, ambulatory sales, services, and wage labor in a local small factory. Finally, the sale of small animals, chickens, and eggs is a common element of earning the household's income. In fact, virtually all of Membrillal's households combine several of the above-mentioned elements to make their ends meet.

Daily household subsistence is largely the responsibility of women because many of the male household members migrate temporarily or permanently to the cities. Migration is due to many families not being able to earn enough income from agriculture. Landownership is limited and the land is unequally distributed, which is the product of the creation of the parroquia, the subsequent retention of communal land by the State, and its sale to a small number of wealthy individuals. Because of the high migration incidence, for extended periods of time (up to eight months annually) many families consist of women, children, and the elderly.

Bellavista. This community is located on a paved road about an hour's drive from the provincial capital of Jipijapa in the humid Portoviejo River valley. It is the least isolated of the seven communities included in the RQA, and public transportation is readily available. Subsistence and cash crops are rice, plantain, peanuts, corn and yuca. Some households with good land also plant coffee and cacao as cash crops. Most houses are typical of the Coast: elevated on stilts, bamboo walls, wooden floors, and palm or zinc roofs. Basic services in Bellavista are superior to those found in many rural communities because of the size and location of the community. Two private schools -- one of them a Catholic school -- exist, an agricultural high school, and a workshop that teaches sewing to adult women. A health center is staffed by a rural doctor, nurse, and nurse's aide. Nearly all households have electricity, and 70 percent are connected to the town's water system (while the rest have wells).

As in the case of Membrillal, the households in Bellavista can be grouped on the basis of landownership. While 10 families own an average of seven hectares, another group of 60

families own less than one hectare each, and 30 families are landless, and are either obliged to rent land or to work as day laborers. All of these households share a common limiting factor: none have irrigation water, so that crops can only be grown during a few months in the winter. Consequently, only 59 percent of the households provide for their sustenance primarily through agriculture, while fully a third are locally employed in the public or private sector, and nearly half participate in either permanent or temporary labor migration.

Three constraints exist on subsistence and cash crop production. The first is lack of land for purchase. All land in the municipality is owned so new land becomes available only very seldom and if so at very high prices. Second, since land is not irrigated, agricultural production is limited to one crop per year, i.e. during the rainy season (January to May). The third is land titling. The titling process is expensive and without titles access to credit is difficult if not impossible. Animal-raising (cattle, chickens, pigs) is adversely affected by the lack of land for pasturage and to grow forage for use during the dry season.

4.4. The Oriente Community

Villano. This community was founded by Quechua-speaking residents of the Archidona-Tena corridor, who moved east two decades ago as part of a more general eastward migration that had its origin in increasing population density and impending landlessness. Community and extra-community organization are strong; Villano is one of several communities forming an agricultural cooperative. Age plays an important role in the organization. Access to land in Villano is typical of indigenous communities in the Oriente. Communal land is distributed to members, but distances between the community center and farmsteads are often considerable, and difficulties in transportation in the region make travel particularly problematic. Household landholdings average one-half to two hectares. Distance is actually a function of age because new generations are allocated more distant land.¹²

Villano, like virtually all indigenous communities in the region, has developed sedentary, relatively intensive market-oriented farming systems. In the tropical regions west of Villano, Quechua communities produce coffee; here in the subtropical cloud forest (600-1,600 meters above sea level), the major product is naranjilla which is also the main economic activity of the agricultural cooperative to which Villano belongs. But transport of the product to the market center is difficult.

As the community of Villano, like its neighbors, has become increasingly integrated into the market system, household organization has been transformed in several important respects. First, individual access to fixed landholdings has replaced traditional patterns of rotational land use. Second, males' traditional responsibilities for hunting and fishing have been replaced by activities related to the production of naranjilla and limited quantities of coffee, cocoa, and feed corn. This change represents, in some respects, an incursion into traditional female responsibilities for horticultural production.

¹² This process must necessarily reach a culmination within the next several generations; at some point, the reserve will be exhausted as all available land is assigned to individual households, and the impending problem of total landlessness will have to be confronted.

Box 3: Family Case Study 3: Villano

Eduardo (30) and Alicia (29) have been married 13 years and they have five children; a sixth is due in a month. Eduardo is a high school graduate and while he is partly a farmer, he is also employed as the budget official for the local office of bilingual education. Like many of the young men in the community, he was active in community organization, and served as treasurer for the provincial indigenous organization Federación de Organizaciones Indígenas de Napo (FOIN). The three older children, aged seven, eight, and eleven, all attend school. The family lives in a wooden house with a corrugated zinc roof, but they have neither electricity nor water. The consumer goods that they own are a gas stove, portable radio-cassette deck, two bicycles, and a small battery-powered television.

The family grows coffee, naranjilla, and cacao for the market, as well as cassava, plantains, bananas, beans, corn, and several varieties of native crops for subsistence. Eduardo and Alicia participate nearly equally in all of the agricultural tasks, and the older children also help. Nevertheless, Alicia undoubtedly does more agricultural work than her husband, because he has a full-time job. He can not hunt now because of the density of human settlement, and fishing is poor. Despite the fact that the community has no access to basic services, Alicia believes that the family is better off than most in the community, but they have suffered some setbacks; for instance, they used to own 15 head of cattle, but they all died. Nevertheless, they are better off than six years ago, because then, they were a young couple with no independent resources, and they received little help from their families.

The major expenses are food, medicine, clothing, and transportation. Carmen also believes that Eduardo spends too much on alcohol. When they do not have enough to cover their expenses, they ask for credit in the local store, or borrow money from friends or relatives. This is expected, and they lend to their relatives just as frequently. In her view, poverty is related principally to the relative isolation of the community; crop prices have risen somewhat in the recent past, but transportation costs are so high that net incomes are very low. The only viable strategy for overcoming poverty is, for her, to obtain more land and to work harder.

The residents of this community have no access to basic services of any kind. The only exception is a small, bilingual primary school. Health care can only be obtained (if transportation can be secured) hours away, and there are no public water or electricity networks.

5. Perceptions of Poverty in Seven Case Studies

This section discusses how households in the seven communities view their living conditions. These vary between communities, regions and according to additional factors such as gender. A summary of the meanings of poverty for the respondents is presented in Table 2. In some cases, different options are listed jointly, reflecting that respondents viewed these as intertwined.

Table 2. The Meaning of Poverty

Rank	Melan	Apunag	Maca Chico	Jatun Era	Bellavista	Membrillal	Villano
1	land, animals: too little	land, animals: too little	land, animals: too little	land, animals: too little	land, animals, capital: too little	employment possibilities: lacking	Land, credit: too little or not accessible
2	elderly and widows: alone without help	elderly and widows: alone without help	income and debt: vicious circle	Local employment possibilities: lacking	Local employment and commerce possibilities: lacking	own business: not possible to open	Roads, services: bad
3	basic needs: unmet	food: too little	basic needs: unmet (housing)	basic needs: unmet (health)	crop prices: too low	Land, animals too little	plant diseases and human illness: rampant
4	--	destiny: born poor	--	--	Consumption goods: lacking; services: poor (transport)	Consumption goods: lacking; services: poor (health)	destiny: born poor

Source: Field interviews for Rural Qualitative Assessment (1994).

In six of the seven communities, limited access to land is viewed as the most important component of poverty, and when respondents were asked to compare their situation with that of their neighbors, and to compare their community with other communities, land was the most commonly-employed yardstick. In large part, access to land also defines the relationship of the individual and household to the community and to the larger society.

5.1. *The Sierra Communities*

Land and animals: Little land and few animals are the most important indicators of living conditions for the Sierra communities.¹³ In the Sierra, land has both cultural and economic significance to indigenous communities. The earth is regarded as a “supernatural symbol of procreation, fecundity, protector of the weak, the infirm and is propitiated accordingly”.¹⁴ Land provides the context within which community and family relations are expressed. In these communities, ‘landless peasant’ is a contradiction in terms. Economically, land is the primary source of subsistence; the precise manner in which the household obtains its sustenance depends on the size and productive quality of its holdings. When appropriate techniques are employed, and when the holding is of sufficient size and productive quality, a surplus can be sold. When it is not, as in case of most of the households in the four Sierra communities, other sources of non-agricultural income must be sought.

¹³ *"Poverty is because of the land; the person who doesn't have any must obligatorily leave to do day labor."* (household interview Maca Chico, #1).

¹⁴ Gustavo Cáceres quoted in: ‘Mujer Andina, Condiciones de Vida y Participación’, Quito.

Access to land has a qualitative aspect; particularly in the Sierra, respondents identified poor soil, steep terrain, and erosion as serious limiting factors to production and productivity. In Jatun Era, for example, landownership is well above average; nevertheless, respondents observed that this factor was more than offset by the agroecological limitations that are present.

The majority of the households in the four communities own relatively few domestic animals, essentially because they do not have enough land to dedicate to pasture. In addition, access to paramos (high Andean meadows) is limited, because little or none was obtained through agrarian reform or purchase. Villagers said that animals are important as a saving means for bad times and for meat consumption. Hence families without animals are generally regarded as poor.

Elderly and widows: The respondents in the Sierra communities were particularly sensitive to the relationship between landholding and the family cycle. In both Melan and Apunag, the perception that the elderly, widows, and other people left 'alone' are the poorest reflects the relative incapacity of this group to adequately exploit their land resources on their own. These households depend to a much greater degree than others on exchanges of labor and land. In particular, sharecropping is used to obtain a scarce resource (labor) in exchange for one (land) that for these households is plentiful.¹⁵

Basic Needs: Three of the four communities in the Sierra assigned needs as housing or health a high weight. Poor housing quality was of particular concern to the inhabitants of Maca Chico and poor health was a defining element of poverty conditions by the families asked in Jatun Era

Income and debt: Only the interviewed families in Maca Chico mentioned income to be a key determinant of poverty but they linked it not only to the obvious purchasing capacity of the household but also to the relationship between income and debt. As quite a few families are indebted in this community, the little current income what families possess has to finance the debt besides maintaining the family. If the families were not indebted, on the other hand, they could rather store some of their produce and sell it at higher market prices later in the season.¹⁶

Destiny: The interviewed families in Apunag feel that they are destined to be poor. Besides ethnic reasons, this feeling could well also be a product of the distant and poor lands where many indigenous communities are located. For example, it is impossible to leave the village of Apunag if rains are heavy because the road connection is so scarce and fragile.

5.2. *The Costa Communities*

Land, animals and capital: As for the Sierra, the command over productive resources like land, animals and capital, is the clearest indication of a family's well-being for Costa inhabitants

¹⁵ "We 'widows' are left alone, because they (the men) leave in order to work" (household interview Membrillal, #1).

¹⁶ "If the farmer had money, he could store (his products) until prices increased, but because of debts, he must sell (immediately)." (household interview Maca Chico, #2).

asked in the two communities. However, it should be taken into account that on the Coast, land is essentially a commodity, and landownership conveys a sense of community to a much lesser degree than in the other regions. Average landownership is greater in the Coast than in the Sierra, in part because in newer areas of settlement, colonization provided 50 hectares to each household. In older, more marginal communities, however (particularly in Manabi Province, where the two case study communities included in this report are located) landownership is nearly as limited as in the Sierra. Additional land is either unavailable or prohibitively expensive, and productivity is limited by the absence of irrigation.¹⁷

Employment and commerce: In the more commercially-based economy typical of the Coast, subsistence production is less central to the well-being of the household, and wage labor or small commercial activities are very important as reflected in the ranking of poverty definitions in the table. Many households provide seasonal plantation labor or try to open small commercial enterprises on the side. To a greater extent than in the Sierra, therefore, lacking local employment opportunities are perceived in Bellavista and Membrillal to be a defining characteristic of poverty. It is interesting to observe that women in Membrillal do not view the lack of employment opportunities as a cause of poverty because women on the coast generally do not work outside the home, with the exception of small animal husbandry activities.

Infrastructure: In general, households are better able to have adequate housing and to feed their families than in the Sierra, and poverty is viewed more in terms of lack of consumer items that few Sierra households possess. On the other hand, inadequate public infrastructure (e.g., roads) and services (particularly, health care in Membrillal) are associated with poverty.

5.3. *The Oriente Community*

Asked what constitutes 'poverty' or 'well-being', the inhabitants of Villano in the Ecuadoran Oriente see their limited command of land and credit as a first, bad roads and services as a second, plant and human health problems as a third and the indigenous people's 'destiny to be poor' as a fourth factor.¹⁸ Limited land availability does not permit traditional forms of rotational slash-and-burn agriculture which, in addition, are located far from the village center. Alternative sources of income in or near the community are scarce.

The physical isolation of the community is keenly felt in Villano. Any trip, whether it be to the reserve (to carry out agricultural tasks) or to regional urban centers (to purchase inputs or food items or to sell their products) involves a huge (and costly) effort. The lack of public services would also be felt to be a product of the relative inaccessibility of the community

¹⁷ "There isn't much income; there are no secure labor (opportunities), and we harvest only once a year." (household interview Bellavista, #1).

¹⁸ "We have neither land nor work... Some of us have land in the reserve, but we can't transport our products from there, because it is so far. It is difficult to carry them, and since I don't have land here, and only in the reserve, I am poor. Sometimes, I don't have enough to make do." (household interview Villano, #1).

As outlined above, the community of Villano is typical of the region in that it lacks virtually all basic services. This situation is conceived of, in part, as a product of the above-mentioned isolation, due to the inadequacy of feeder roads and public transportation. For that reason, the virtual absence of basic public services (e.g., potable water, electricity, elimination of wastes) is seen to be a major component of the poverty that characterizes the community and the entire region.

For many indigenous inhabitants of Oriente communities like Villano, the situation is so bleak that poverty seems to be preordained.¹⁹ This attitude, however, may reflect less the acceptance of fate than a recognition of the structural nature of poverty in a community separated from the rest of the country by much more than a few miles of bad road.

Especially women mentioned that men's alcohol consumption and drinking habits are big problems. Men are responsible for money management and they spend a sizable portion of earnings from naranjilla sales on fiestas, alcohol and consumer goods as opposed to agriculture or home improvements.

6. Household and Community Strategies to Address Rural Poverty

This section describes three sets of mechanisms used by rural households in the seven communities to make ends meet in times of economic hardship.²⁰ First, households attempt to complement and diversify income. Second, they reduce expenditures which can largely only be achieved by limiting the already low levels of consumption. Third, households depend to varying degrees on intra-family and intra-community help and resource exchange. The resulting survival strategies should not be understood merely as the selection of separate items, as from a menu. Rather, the interaction among the various elements is very important, and as conditions change, the use of specific mechanisms and their relative importance may be substantially modified.

6.1. Strategies to Increase and Diversify Income

6.1.1. Sierra

The strategies to increase and diversify income are presented in Table 3 and as can be observed, respondents did not include subsistence production as a diversification strategy. Nevertheless, the most essential component of household reproduction (that is, its capacity to

¹⁹ "We have lived poor, and we have to live poor, like our parents and grandparents." (household interview Villano, #2).

²⁰ Interviewers gave the families a time-frame from 1988 to the present when they discussed these alternative strategies. Although reference to 1988 was easy for persons interviewed on the Coast and in the Oriente, it was not possible for persons in the Sierra because the communities studied had little connection with national life, and the individual's singular frame of reference was the life cycle (birth of a child, marriage, death of a family member).

renew itself on a daily and generational basis) is subsistence production. The evolution of the independent, landowning peasant household has not altered the central role that subsistence production plays in rural communities in the Sierra. Answers in Table 3 should therefore be viewed as 'additional' income sources.

Table 3. Strategies to complement household income.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Melan</i>	<i>Apunag</i>	<i>Maca Chico</i>	<i>Jatun Era</i>	<i>Bellavista</i>	<i>Membrillar</i>	<i>Villano</i>
1	Temporary migration	Female & child labor	Temporary migration	Female & child labor	Family assistance	Permanent migration	Cash crops
2	Female & child labor	Temporary migration	Domestic animals	Domestic animals	Domestic animals	Temporary migration	Subsistence production
3	Land/labor exchanges	Domestic animals	Piece work	Temporary migration	Permanent migration	Small business	Day labor, work harder
4	Weaving	Land/labor exchanges	Land/labor exchanges	—	Small business	Family subsistence	—
5	Day labor	Cash crops	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Field interviews for Rural Qualitative Assessment (1994).

Temporary migration. Given the limitations in agricultural production and limited local employment opportunities, the most common element to earn additional income is temporary migration of one or several family members. Usually, young men and male heads of households migrate on a temporary and often cyclical basis. Most frequently, labor is provided in urban centers, and less often, in agriculture. In both cases, migration takes place during lulls in the cropping cycle on the small holding.

The migration rate for household heads ranges from 55 percent in Melan to 20 percent in Jatun Era, and young men migrate in similar proportions. Men from Melan travel primarily to Quito to work in construction (i.e., part of the informal sector) and to a lesser degree, to rural areas in the provinces of Esmeraldas (on the Coast) and Napo (in the Oriente). Most men migrate for a total of two to three months at a time, but rarely at a single stretch. They return home briefly (usually during weekends or at the end of the month) to remit their savings to their families. Men migrate mostly to Quito, to the regional centers like Ambato or Latacunga, or to the rice-producing region around Quevedo, on the Coast.²¹

Female and child labor. Temporary male migration increases household labor and management responsibilities for women and children. The complementary nature of these two mechanisms is illustrated by their ranking as the top two mechanisms to supplement incomes in three of the four Sierra communities surveyed. Women have always played a central role in agricultural production in indigenous communities in the Sierra, and children assume

²¹ For some, migration begins at a very early age. "Since I was very young, I've migrated -- beginning at age seven -- and I've stated migrating again because I can't support my family staying here" (household #2, Melan).

increasing responsibilities as they become older. In addition, women and children are responsible for household reproduction (cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, health care, and other tasks). Studies indicate that women in communities like those studied have a work day of 15 to 18 hours; culturally, leisure is considered unacceptable for women, and they may work at spinning wool even as they walk and talk.

In addition to household labor, communal labor obligations that formerly were the responsibility of men have shifted to women. In communities like Melan, women have largely replaced men in *mingas* (communal labor parties), and labor exchanges within the extended family. It is not surprising that more women than men report this component as an important part of household survival.

As already mentioned above, while parents do integrate children more in the household work, they nevertheless do not take them out of school.

Small animal husbandry. In times of hardship families rely on the functions small animal husbandry has in an integrated farming system. Animals consume crop byproducts (e.g., corn stalks), and complement crop production (e.g., by providing manure). Small animal (sheep, pigs, chickens, guinea pigs, and rabbits) husbandry is carried out in the four communities as a means of saving for emergencies (especially illness or crop loss), or for regular purchases (particularly costs related to attending school: clothing, books, and supplies). This element of the farming system nearly always falls within the province of women and, in fact, small animal raising is one of the few women's activities which does not require consultation with one's spouse, e.g. women can sell animals without their husbands' permission. It is particularly important for the four communities because they lack access to pasture land and therefore, have a very limited opportunity to raise cattle.

Day labor and land/labor exchanges. Marginal Sierra families in three of the four communities exchange land and labor more intensively in times of hardship and this can again be viewed as complementary to temporary migration. In addition to regular exchanges of land and labor between households which do not have labor (elderly, widows) or land (the very poor), increased exchange of labor and land occurs if male family members migrate temporarily to the cities. Not every family need to send one or more family members to the cities since the tasks of those who leave on the land have to be assumed by the rest of the family or -- if this does not suffice -- by other members of the community. Land and labor exchanges are now very common in these communities. In Melan, for example, 35 of 49 households engage in land or labor exchanges.

Additionally, members of the poorest households may engage in day labor on a sporadic basis in their own or in neighboring communities, and are hired by slightly more affluent peasant households. To some degree, community members are hired as a form of community assistance in very bad times.²²

²² Labor is also provided by a limited number of rural residents on neighboring haciendas. Because of mechanization, however, there is little demand for a permanent labor force, and work may only be available for labor-intensive activities, such as sowing and harvesting, that take place at the same time as in the peasant community.

Handicrafts. In both Melan and Maca Chico families have started to weave and produce piecework for the local market which earns additional income. Several men in Melan weave ponchos, shawls, and skirts on hand looms, using wool that is spun by women. Earnings are meager, however, because the weavers do not know how to dye their cloth. For that reason, weaving is a part-time job. In Maca Chico, young men have started to sew trousers on a piecework basis, using machines purchased on credit in the provincial capital.

6.1.2. The Costa Communities

Permanent and temporary migration. Permanent and temporary migration is a very important additional income source for the Costa communities. It is common to encounter households with members who have permanently moved to urban centers--usually Manta or Guayaquil--in order to obtain secondary school education or employment. For the household, their remittances are an important source of income, and are used to cover food, education, and health care expenses. An estimated 90 per cent of households in Bellavista receive such remittances.

While this form of migration involves full-time urban residence, it rarely represents a total separation from the countryside. At the national level, the rate of urban-rural migration is fully one-half of rural-urban migration, and usually takes place when land becomes available to landless rural-urban migrants, or in cases of urban unemployment. Additionally, it is frequently the case that only part of a household moves to the city; for instance, young children may be left with grandparents or other relatives and remittances cover their expenses. In addition, when parents in the community of origin become ill, they may travel to their children's urban residence to obtain health care. In this sense, permanent migrants maintain a presence in their rural places of origin.

While less prominent, rural inhabitants of coastal communities also migrate on a temporary and usually cyclical basis. In Bellavista, men work as laborers on medium- and large-scale coffee and banana plantations during the harvest (June-July). In Membrillar, men work on neighboring large farms and ranches. These constitute an essential component of total household income.

Family assistance. Family assistance comprising work of women and children but also help from relatives in the form of work or credit constitute an important additional income source for the Costa communities as well. As in the Sierra, children constitute an important element of the household labor force, although they tend to start working at a somewhat later age. Traditionally, rural women in the Coast have not worked in the wage labor force. In the past five years, however, their participation in non-traditional crop plantations and processing plants has increased in many rural communities of the Costa but this process has not yet started in the two communities under study.

Labor exchanges within and among households are uncommon in these mestizo communities, and communal labor is a relatively rare phenomenon. Members of the nuclear and extended family assist relatives with small loans for which there is no fixed repayment period. This component illustrates that household economies are more monetarized on the Coast than in the Sierra.

Small businesses. Microenterprises are more commonly encountered in communities like Bellavista and Membrillal than in the Sierra and have become an important income source.

They may include home-based garment production, shop-keeping, laundry services, small appliance repair, charcoal production, preparation of coffee sacks, and the like. Many development projects are based on local capacity to initiate and sustain this type of activity, and households that have small businesses are perceived to be better off than those that do not.

Small animal husbandry. Women in the coastal communities are primarily responsible for raising chickens and pigs as a source of savings and occasional special need.

6.1.3. The Oriente Community

Residents of the community of Villano report that strategies to increase income are based on three principle elements. First, and as discussed earlier, agricultural production has become more market-oriented. In the area around Villano, naranjilla production for the national market is a major income source. Smaller amounts of coffee, cacao, and hard (feed) corn are also produced and sold.

Second, families in Villano attempt to increase subsistence production of agricultural produce which traditionally has been the responsibility of women, and from hunting and fishing, which was considered to be men's work. The latter is increasingly less important, however, as environmental degradation and demographic pressures limit the availability of wild animals and fish. Consequently, tasks related to the production of corn, cassava, bananas, peanuts, and other subsistence crops is currently shared with men.

Third, the kind of temporary, cyclical migration undertaken in the Sierra and Coast is not found in the Oriente, but day labor is another way in which essential cash income can be obtained. For the most part, labor is provided in the production and packaging of naranjilla in nearby cooperative subcenters.

6.2. Strategies to Reduce Household Expenditures

It can be seen in Table 4 that households in the seven communities combine any of eight mechanisms to reduce expenditures as a response to poverty. As in the case of the root causes of poverty, some responses are multiple, because strategies to reduce spending are interlinked.

6.2.1. Sierra

In the Sierra, household expenditures are reduced primarily by purchasing fewer and cheaper foodstuffs and clothing. Other components of the strategy include the use of traditional medicine, limiting ritual expenses (fiestas), walking instead of using public transportation, and, in Jatun Era, planning on fewer children.

Table 4. Items for which household expenditures are reduced.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Melan</i>	<i>Apunag</i>	<i>Maca Chico</i>	<i>Jatun Era</i>	<i>Bellavista</i>	<i>Membrillar</i>	<i>Villano</i>
1	Food	Clothing	Food	Clothing	Clothing	Food	Food, clothing, medicine
2	Clothing	Medicine	Clothing	Food	Food	Medicine	Alcohol, fiestas
3	Fiestas	Food	Fiestas	Number of children	Medicine	Clothing	Public transport
4	Food sharing	Fiestas	Public transport	--	Secondary school	--	--

Source: Field interviews for Rural Qualitative Assessment (1994).

Food. Households in all four Sierra communities report that they are purchasing less food and are utilizing the most inexpensive items available. In particular, women reported this mechanism. Processed foodstuffs such as starches (especially pasta and rice), salt, sugar, and vegetable shortening are used in very small quantities to complement diets based largely on potatoes, corn, and barley. The consumption of more nutritious, but more expensive items, such as meat and milk is rare.²³

Clothing. Households report that they purchase clothing less frequently than before and used clothing is often sought out. Women and children wear clothes for longer periods of time; children's clothing is passed down to younger siblings. In indigenous communities, women tend to wear traditional clothing more than men, but this custom still requires the purchase of manufactured items. While in communities like Melan, women sew clothing from cloth purchased in local markets, the self-production of cloth is essentially a lost art.

Community ritual. Community celebrations (fiestas) are less common and less expensive. In Apunag, some households report that they do not participate in celebrations at all, in order to dedicate scarce resources to food consumption. In Maca Chico, community ritual celebrations have been shortened considerably, while in Melan, fiesta expenditures have been converted from a community responsibility to an individual household option. While this change may be viewed in a positive light, one negative impact is that it tends to reduce community solidarity.

Medicine. Households have also reduced their expenditures for medicine. In the Sierra, they had traditionally relied upon locally-available herbs and other remedies and only seldom used government provided services. Nevertheless, these few visits to clinics and hospitals have been reduced and are now reserved only for the gravest cases.

²³

This element of household survival is particularly significant given the fact that the rates of infant and child malnutrition are highest in rural communities in the Sierra. In 1990, chronic malnutrition of children below the age of five reached 67 per cent in the rural Sierra. This compares very high to a national average of 45 per cent. See World Bank (1995).

Transportation. Another way to reduce expenditures, which was reported in Maca Chico and Apunag, is to walk rather than pay for public transportation. Maca Chico is somewhat less isolated than the other three communities, however; this mechanism is not practical for traveling to and from more isolated communities on a regular basis. In Apunag, individuals walk up to four hours to reach a neighboring community to save the transport cost of 2000 sucres (about US\$1).

Family planning. A long-range mechanism mentioned by several women in Jatun Era is to limit the size of the family. This element would be related to the capacity of the family to redistribute labor responsibilities and to ensure the future care of the parents. Data aggregated at the national level indicate that fertility has decreased consistently since the 1960s, and while rural families are still larger, on average, than their urban counterparts, the demographic transition has clearly arrived in rural Ecuador.

6.2.2. The Coast

Food. In Membrillar, reduction in food consumption was the most important means of reducing expenditures. The standard diet is typical of the rural poor on the Coast; it consists of rice, plantain, and peanut sauce. Fish may be eaten in small quantities twice a week, while meat is rarely or never consumed. In Bellavista, the reduction of food consumption was the second most important factor mentioned. Nevertheless, the changes that have been put into effect are significant. Households report that they now eat only twice a day, and consumption has been decreased. As in the Sierra, meat consumption is relatively infrequent. Children no longer drink milk, and the consumption of fruit juices has been cut in half.

Clothing. Coastal households have reduced clothing expenditures by purchase ready-made items rather than those sewed by tailors and by using clothing for as long as possible. In contrast to the Sierra, women are more preoccupied with clothing purchases than men.

Medicine. As in the Sierra, many households have opted to limit visits to clinics and hospitals to the strictly necessary, and visit traditional curers and midwives. Similarly, locally-available herbs and other remedies are used instead of purchasing medicine.

Education. Most households believe that the education of their children is of utmost importance, and have tended to keep them in school longer than in the past. In addition, the traditional breach in years of school attendance between boys and girls has tended to close. Nevertheless, while school attendance is both free and obligatory, the related costs can be considerable. In times of scarce household income, when child labor is particularly important, the tendency to withdraw children from school (and/or high rates of absenteeism) can be expected. This tendency is observed, for example, in the case of Bellavista, where children are normally not sent to secondary school.

6.2.3. Oriente

The finding that half of respondents in Villano could not identify any particular mechanism for reducing expenses reflects less the absence of a strategy than the fact that the elements of minimizing expenditures are so common and so long-standing (i.e., not a 'new'

strategy). That is, the purchase of food items, agricultural inputs and medicine has never been an important part of the household economy and can therefore not be readily reduced. Nevertheless, other respondents reported that they have, in fact, reduced the purchase of food, clothing, and medicine, that they have reduced the consumption of alcohol related to ritual activities, and travel more than before by foot.

6.3. *Mutual Assistance Through the Exchange of Resources*

In all three regions, households and communities have developed mechanisms by which neighbors and family members assist each other. These mechanisms do not constitute a safety net, *per se*, because they are not designed simply to care for those who can not care for themselves. Rather, in the traditional setting, they are an integral part of community and household membership and provide not only for the exchange of resources (e.g., land for labor), but allow for the expression and extension of community solidarity and cohesion, as well. As such, they are particularly important in indigenous communities, whose very existence is based on blood and ritual family bonds.

In the Sierra, resources are exchanged in times of family crisis, such as illness, death, or crop loss. Neighbors and, in particular, family members, can be counted on to provide food, labor, or money in such moments. This practice is simply the extension of a more general principle of exchange which, as discussed earlier, provides for different forms of sharecropping, labor exchanges, or sporadic wage labor. But the community at large also provides a form of safety net in many cases. For example, the community of Melan does not have a cemetery and when somebody dies, special transport must be hired to take the deceased and his or her relatives to the next cemetery at a cost of 100,000 sucres (US\$50). The community pays one-half of this cost.

In addition, indigenous communities have a long history of communal labor, which is normally provided on a monthly basis for regular maintenance of community infrastructure, such as roads. In addition, special labor obligations may be provided if, for instance, the community votes to participate in a particular project (e.g., construction of a water system or a community meeting hall). Communal crop production is relatively rare, but communal ownership of pasture land is less so (even though this factor is limited in the four communities under discussion).

Similarly, in indigenous communities in the Oriente such as Villano, most households are bonded by family ties. Consequently, there is no clear distinction between family and community assistance. As in the Sierra, members of extended families frequently exchange labor services, and loans may be provided on an informal basis. Similarly, communal *minga* labor is convened for the maintenance or improvement of community infrastructure.

In contrast, in coastal communities like Bellavista and Membrillal, blood and ritual ties among households are weaker. Consequently, assistance is rarely afforded within the community. For example, 10 of Bellavista's 26 respondents reported that no mutual aid links community members. It is much more common to contract day labor for community works, as household members are more fully integrated into regional cash economies than in the Sierra or Oriente.

7. Recommendations for Poverty Reduction

Residents of the seven communities were asked to recommend a response to their poverty. Several interesting lessons can be drawn from the responses summarized in Table 5. First, respondents believe that solutions are at hand, and that certain elements related to poverty can be addressed. This finding contradicts the old 'culture of poverty' theory and which argues that the poor accept their situation and transmit norms and values related to living in poverty from generation to generation.

Second, the expressed solutions are quite practical. Responses do not call for major land reforms or simply income transfers. Families do not ask for 'more land and animals' as one might have expected after their own poverty definitions showed above. Rather, families overwhelmingly suggest measures which will increase the productivity of available land and human resources. Infrastructure (48 percent) and training emerge as very important suggested solutions.

Third, the families distinguish between exogenous and endogenous factors they view as important to better living conditions and do not only expect 'help' to come from the outside. Three of the seven communities give organization of the community itself a high importance in overcoming poverty.

Table 8. Recommendations for Responding to Poverty.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Melan</i>	<i>Apunag</i>	<i>Maca Chico</i>	<i>Jatun Era</i>	<i>Bellavista</i>	<i>Membrillal</i>	<i>Villano</i>
1	Credit for land, animals, and inputs	Credit for land and animals; roads	Training	Credit and training	Employment generation	Services (water, latrines)	Roads
2	Services (latrines, electricity, water)	Community organization	Roads, bridge, irrigation	Organiz.	Credit for land, animals, and inputs	Employment generation	Services (water, health)
3	Communal meeting hall	More work	Services (water, latrines)	Roads, communal meeting hall, telephones	Community organization	Roads	Communal meeting hall
4	Communal store	—	Church, clinic, school	—	Improved economic conditions	Schools	Credit
5	Training	—	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Field Interviews for Rural Qualitative Assessment (1994).

7.1. Sierra

The first recommendation from the four Sierra communities is related to enhancing the use of -- rather than the access to -- land. This recommendation has two interrelated parts. First, since local resources alone are insufficient, rural families ask for credit to purchase agricultural inputs and animals. Second, training is necessary for maximizing the utility of these resources. In particular, most of these households have never participated in development projects, and respondents perceive the need for extension programs that include components in crop, domestic animal, and forest management.

Training is sought for both agricultural and other activities. Small farmers want to know how to recover the productive capacity of the soil, prevent soil erosion, produce and use organic fertilizers and have access to improved seeds to combat plant disease and increase yields. They also want to be trained in large and small animal health and management, e.g., parasite treatment. Inhabitants of Jatun Era recommend the establishment of an artisan workshop.

A second thread that runs through the recommendations offered in the Sierra relates to the development of infrastructure, both productive (particularly roads, bridges, and irrigation systems) and social (e.g., community meeting centers, community stores, and churches). Closely linked to training activities, residents of Melan seek the creation of a community weaving center which would provide youth with local employment so that they would not have to migrate and allow savings on clothing purchases. A third area of concern is basic services; water, electricity, latrines, telephone systems, health centers, and schools. Finally, it is felt in several communities that local organizational capacity is inadequate and that the community itself has to improve its own support system of members.

7.2. The Coast

For rural inhabitants of the Coast, employment is more of a central concern to household sustenance than in the Sierra because agriculture, which provides the main source of household income, is not a year-round occupation. Employment opportunities refer to both within the community as well as in urban centers. In Bellavista, the permanent unemployment rate among the economically active population is about 30 to 40 per cent.

In Membrillal, other concerns relate to infrastructure and services. In Membrillal, water, which is only available from wells, is of highest concern and families desire a pump and make the existing water system operationable. Latrine upgrading for the 30 percent of households which do not have this service is similarly sought. Community members also seek road upgrading to facilitate market access year-round because the 12 km dirt road which links Membrillal and Manta is impassable during the rainy season. The residents of Bellavista, like Sierra communities, find that credit for the purchase of land, domestic animals, and agricultural inputs is necessary. Finally, parents in Membrillal recommend that the Ministry of Education improve the quality of education in the primary school which has 250 students but only four professors. In addition to the high student-teacher ratio, the parents' chief complaint is teacher absenteeism to which the ministry has not responded to date.

In contrast to Membrillal, Bellavista residents do not recommend infrastructure and services but rather credit and improved community organization. Credit is needed for land and animal acquisition, agricultural inputs and storage facilities. Credit would help families to store their products and wait for better prices before selling them in the market. For example, the price of corn at harvest is 6000 sucres per 100 pounds but the price rises to 22000 sucres thereafter. Community members also feel that communal organization has seriously slipped recently, partly reflecting that many male members have migrated to the urban centers in the Coast.

7.3. *Oriente*

Infrastructure and basic services projects are dominant in the answers of the inhabitants of Villano. They clearly prioritize the completion of the road connecting the village to Archidona of which 1.5 km is missing. This will improve market access considerably. Services like water and health rank second -- the community is seeking assistance in the construction of a water system from the Municipal Council of Archidona and Integrated Health Program of the agricultural cooperative of which it is a member. A community center, under construction by the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo, is viewed as a symbol of well-being in the community and families anxiously await its completion. Finally, credit is viewed as a fourth important item to overcome poverty.

8. **Final Comments**

Our aim with this qualitative assessment was to learn about the views of poor rural households on their living conditions, strategies in times of change and recommendations for anti-poverty programs. Although the scope of this assessment was not even close to a 'representative survey', we have nevertheless obtained several very interesting insights into the rural life of seven communities which could well be indicative of the rural areas in general. Further, while the presented qualitative analysis cannot substitute for more quantitative studies using a representative survey like the Living Standard Measurement Survey, the presented results can be viewed as complementary: they can help researchers formulate questions and research subjects which can then be applied in quantitative analyses.

We found that rural life is everything but static. Almost none of the rural households in the seven very different communities survive on subsistence agriculture alone. New income opportunities are sought, ranging from traditional animal husbandry to piecework, specialization in cash crops to migration and from weaving to the start of small businesses. The choice of this array of income sources depends primarily on the family composition but also community support and mutual assistance between families.

Of most importance is that the rural poor believe that practical solutions to overcome their poverty are at hand. Families distinguish very clearly between factors they have to improve within their community from those where outside help is needed; infrastructure and training are the main categories suggested for outside assistance.

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Annex 1: Local Organization

Rural people in Ecuador are organized at several levels. While organizational capacity varies by region and social group, the institutions mentioned here can be found throughout the country. First, the *comuna* is the legal expression of most rural communities; alternatively, they may be instituted as cooperatives. Neither alternative necessarily implies a specific form of marshalling community resources and in practical terms, there is usually no significant difference between the two.

In the Sierra, community organization is particularly strong because most members are related by blood or ritual kinship ties, which permit households to enter into different land/labor arrangements, including sharecropping (*partidario*) and labor exchanges (*prestamanos*). In addition, communal labor (*minga*) continues to be a standard element of community organization centuries after its introduction by the Incas. Indigenous communities in the Oriente are similarly based on kinship relations. In contrast, mestizo communities in the Oriente and in the Coast usually have weaker kinship ties and are usually poorly organized at the local level.

Additionally, communities may be linked on a regional and national basis. Their relationship to 'higher' levels, is not based on formal membership or strict lines of authority, but on representation and common interests.

Thus, at the lowest level, the *organizaciones de segundo grado* (frequently called *uniones*) link as many as 20 communities in a limited area (often a single parroquia or canton). An example is UPOCAM (Union de Organizaciones Populares y Campesinas de Manabi) to which the case study community of Membrillal belongs. These organizations (as well as the individual communities) may, in turn, belong to federations that operate on a provincial basis. Examples include FICI (Federacion Indigena y Campesina de Imbabura) in the Sierra and FOIN (Federacion de Organizaciones Indigenas de Napo) in the Oriente, to which the case study community of Villano belongs.

The next level links organizations in each of Ecuador's three principle regions. For example, CONFENIAE (Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana) represents indigenous organizations, such as FOIN, throughout the Oriente. Finally, CONAIE (Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas Ecuatorianas) represents indigenous interests at the national level. A theoretical organizational chart is complicated, first, by the fact that all levels can intersect at any point. For instance, an individual community can deal directly with CONAIE. Second, not all indigenous communities participate in this system. Most notably, those that have converted to evangelical Protestantism have developed a parallel chain of organization.

In the past decade, different levels of community organization have been strengthened, particularly within the indigenous population. In particular, as they have become more experienced in interacting with governmental and non-governmental agencies, communities have become increasingly capable of identifying specific problems, and of searching for solutions. A series of recent events have enhanced this effect. The 1987 earthquake obliged community organizations in the Sierra and Oriente to seek outside assistance and, in the process, to learn to propose and manage specific projects and programs. The 1990 'uprising' and the 1993 'march to Quito' further consolidated indigenous organizational capacity and redefined the relationship between the indigenous population and non-indigenous power blocs. The debate over the new Agrarian Law has continued that process; in this case, the participation of various indigenous groups has been decisive in the form that the law will take in its final form.

ADDENDUM

After the fieldwork for the Rural Qualitative Assessment had been undertaken, UNICEF Ecuador commissioned a second round of qualitative assessments in six Sierra communities to complement the analysis and examine whether the findings of the initial community studies were confirmed. In this addendum, we briefly compare the findings of the UNICEF field research to the results of the RQA. In general, the major conclusions of the RQA pertaining to the Sierra communities are confirmed.

Community Characteristics: The six communities analyzed in this addendum are very similar to the four studied in the RQA with respect to their command of productive resources, their heterogeneity, and their access to basic services. They are all located in Ecuador's highland or *Sierra* region. Three (Molobog, Galgualán, and Guanlur) are in the Licto region of southern Chimborazo province, not far from the communities of Melán and Apunag, which were included in the RQA. A fourth community (Chilsulchi Grande) is located in Cotopaxi province, between the capital of Latacunga and the town of Sigchos. The final two communities are somewhat different than the others because they are located in the southern highland province of Cañar, which was not covered in the first phase.

Table A1. General community characteristics

Community	Province	Ethnicity	Population
Molobog	Chimborazo	Indigenous	700
Galgualán	Chimborazo	Indigenous	190
Guanlur	Chimborazo	Indigenous	198
Chilsulchi Grande	Cotopaxi	Indigenous	182
Achupillas	Cañar	Indigenous	192
Palmas Pamba	Cañar	Indigenous	170 (approx.)

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995).

Like the four communities included in the first phase, these six are indigenous according to nearly any definition. For instance, the Quechua language is spoken exclusively or partially by all or nearly all residents. In addition, the study reveals the presence of other sociocultural characteristics that reflect indigenous identity, including community organization and household and community labor exchanges.

The economy and social structure of all six communities, like the original four, are based on small-scale agricultural production that is oriented toward subsistence production and sporadic marketing of small surpluses. Additionally, day labor in off-farm activities is another income source. In each of the six, access to land is extremely limited, most holdings ranging in size from less than two hectares to no more than five hectares.

Access to basic services is scarce. Only in Achupillas have some households obtained potable water; all households in all communities lack sewage. Electricity is available to between 40 and 80 per cent of households in Molobog, Galgualán, and Chilsulchi Grande, but none in Palmas Pamba. While an electric system has been installed in Achupillas, it is not connected to

individual homes because many families can not afford an installation fee amounting to nearly US\$100.

Perceptions of Poverty: Like in the RQA, land was also of greatest concern in these six *Sierra* communities. This underscores the nature of rural poverty in Ecuador as it is experienced and perceived by indigenous peasant farmers. In particular, respondents felt that their poverty was principally due to (a) the limited access to land; (b) the poor productive quality of the land as in all communities the land is steeply sloped and highly eroded; (c) the lack of access to irrigation facilities; and (d) the limited capacity to maintain and sell large domestic animals (see Table A2).

Table A2. Definition of Poverty

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Molobog</i>	<i>Galgualán</i>	<i>Guanlur</i>	<i>Chisulchi</i>	<i>Achupillas</i>	<i>Palmas Grande</i>
1	Little land, irrigation	Land, inheritance	Irrigation	Poor soil	Little land, poor land	No land
2	Erosion poor land	Erosion	Little land	Poor climate	Low productivity	No animals
3	Elderly and widows; no help	--	Poor land	Low income	Poor climate	Low productivity
4	Bad organization	--	Elderly and widows	Little land; few animals	--	--
5	--	--	Fate	Elderly and widows	--	--

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995).

Strategies to increase and diversity income. As in the *Sierra* communities included in the RQA, the three most commonly mentioned possibilities to increase household income in the UNICEF study were migration, women and child labor and animal husbandry/crop diversification. Temporary male migration rates vary between 30 percent (*Molobog*), 70 percent (*Guanlur*) to 100 percent (*Galgualán*). This finding is consistent with the RQA and with many studies conducted in Ecuador's highland rural communities. Relating to women and child labor, the RQA and the research in the additional six communities reveal that many rural women work for wages on a sporadic basis, either within the community (e.g., assisting in agricultural tasks on larger holdings) or in nearby haciendas. Table A.3 summarizes the results.

Table A3. Strategies to complement household income

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Molobog</i>	<i>Galqualán</i>	<i>Guanlur</i>	<i>Chisulchi</i>	<i>Achupillas</i>	<i>Palmas Grande</i>
1	Temporary migration, day labor	Temporary migration	Female & child labor	Market prod., production	Temporary migration	Animal husbandry
2	Female & child labor	Female & child labor	Animal husbandry	Animal husbandry	Female & child labor	Temporary migration
3	Animal husbandry	Day labor migration	Temporary migration	Temporary husbandry	Animal	Work in hacienda
4	Crop diversification	--	Help from children	Other	Other	Female & child labor
5	Help from family	--	Female migration	--	--	--

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995)

Strategies to reduce expenditures. Respondents--particularly women--identified ways in which they reduce expenditures in times of economic hardship. As in the four communities studied in the RQA, households in the six communities under consideration report that in particular, they have limited consumption of food, clothing, and medicine by purchasing them in lesser quantity and poorer quality.

Table A4. Items for which household expenditures are reduced

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Molobog</i>	<i>Galqualán</i>	<i>Guanlur</i>	<i>Chisulchi</i>	<i>Achupillas</i>	<i>Palmas Grande</i>
1	Fiestas	Medicine	Fiestas	Fiestas	Food, clothing	Fiestas
2	Food	Food	Food	Medicine	Medicine	Medicine
3	Fewer children	Fiestas	None	Clothing	Fiestas	Clothing
4	Medicine	--	Medicine	Food	--	Food
5	Clothing	--	Clothing	Transportation	--	--

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995).

An interesting difference with respect to the RQA is that in three of the original four communities, the reduction of expenditures on community celebrations (*fiestas*) was mentioned, but only as the third or fourth most important option. In contrast, *fiestas* were mentioned in four of the six communities under consideration here as the first option for reducing expenditures. In many Sierra communities, *fiestas* serve a series of important functions related to maintaining community cohesion and solidarity. Therefore, the decline or disappearance of these events has the potential to weaken the capacity of communities to work together to confront times of economic crisis.

Mutual assistance through the exchange of resources. The RQA demonstrates that one of the defining characteristics of highland indigenous communities and families has long been the implementation of different forms mutual assistance, which consists of two different sets of practices. First, extended families and neighbors exchange labor both on a regular basis and in times of special need. Second, in moments of extreme crisis, people may obtain loans or gifts of money or goods.

Findings from the six communities under study here underscore an important dimension of this feature of collective action. In four of the six, most respondents indicated that they rely principally on family, friends, and neighbors, while only two (Achupillas and Palmas Pamba) identified the community itself as the primary source of assistance. Many respondents felt that community solidarity is declining because they are poorly organized and because individual households are obliged to ensure their own survival, often through the frequent absence of household heads and others. In these circumstances, family members and neighbors find it hard to honor labor exchange commitments.

Table A5. Sources of mutual assistance through the exchange of resources

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Molobog</i>	<i>Galgalán</i>	<i>Guanlur</i>	<i>Chisulchi</i>	<i>Achupillas</i>	<i>Palmas Grande</i>
1	Family	Family	Friends, neighbors	Family	Community	Community
2	Institutions	Friends, neighbors, community	Family	Institutions, community	Family	Family, neighbors
3	Friends, neighbors	--	Community	Neighbors	Neighbors	Hacienda, institutions
4	Community	--	Institutions	Other communities	Institutions	--

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995).

Recommendations for Poverty Reduction. Responses from the six communities under study display substantial agreement with the four highland communities analyzed in the RQA

with respect to the concrete nature of recommendations for addressing poverty. As in the RQA, these communities do not consider structural measures such as redistribution of land or income as realistic options. Clearly, since these communities have been essentially defined by poverty for generations, it is impossible for them to visualize the possibility for broad, sweeping change. Nevertheless, as in the communities covered in the RQA, they readily identify specific actions that can be taken to improve conditions in their communities. The recommendations shown in Table A6 confirm the emphasis on infrastructural investment (especially in irrigation, potable water) and agricultural extension/training to raise the productivity of land. Credit is also given a prominent role by the respondents, although to a somewhat lesser extent than in the RQA communities.

Table A6. Recommendations for Responding to Poverty

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Molobog</i>	<i>Galgualán</i>	<i>Guanlur</i>	<i>Chisulchi</i>	<i>Achupillas</i>	<i>Palmas Grande</i>
1	Credit	None	Irrigation	Community organization	Irrigation & pot. water	Irrigation & pot. water
2	Irrigation	Irrigation	Training	Improve crop productivity	Training	Community organization
3	Community organization	Improve soil	Improve crop diversity	Reforestation	Community infrastructure	Credit
4	Improve agroecology	Others	Potable water	Animal husb.	Latrines	Latrines

Source: Field interviews for UNICEF Qualitative Assessment (1995).

Conclusions. The study of the six highland indigenous communities of Molobog, Galgualán, Guanlur, Chisulchi Grande, Achupillas, and Palmas Pamba further illustrate perceptions of rural poverty, the means by which it is addressed on a daily basis, and the actions that the poor believe can and should be taken. These six additional case studies confirm to a large degree the findings portrayed in the RQA relating to the Sierra communities.

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