

1960s:

Ever since the first group of volunteers arrived on August 7, 1962, Peace Corps Ecuador has continually adapted its programs to meet the changing needs of the country and its people. Today, more than 5,000 volunteers have served during 40 years of uninterrupted service. Their accomplishments are as numerous and diverse as the volunteers themselves.

Peace Corps Ecuador was at its height in the late 1960s with more than 300 volunteers serving throughout the country. Community development volunteers did everything from organizing groups to build bridges, roads and schools to teaching classes in home improvement, health and sanitation and gardening. Volunteers also formed savings and loan cooperatives, taught in schools and universities, and helped groups make, market and improve artisan goods.

Peace Corps helped bring light to Ecuador through the national electrification program where skilled engineers and linesmen from the states trained nationals in the construction, operation and maintenance of electrical systems throughout the country. In the Campesino Leadership program, volunteers addressed social injustice by forming leaders out of poor disenfranchised farmers. At Rancho Ronald, a demonstrative farm created by Peace Corps, volunteers trained farmers throughout the country in proper livestock management, while improving the quality of cattle by breeding and selling low-cost genetically superior bulls. During the 1960s, Peace Corps Ecuador also saw the rich literary talent of its volunteers. *The Barrios of Manta* was the first book ever written about the Peace Corps experience by Ecuador I volunteers, Rhoda and Earle Brooks. *Living Poor*, written by Moritz Thomsen, chronicles the author's life in a poor coastal community. For its insightful perspective and simple, yet eloquent writing it is popularly considered the best book ever written about Peace Corps life. Each year, *RPCV Peace Corps Writers & Readers* presents the Moritz Thomsen Peace Corps Experience Award for the best short essay on life in the Peace Corps. The organization also presents the Paul Cowan Non-Fiction Award,

named after the political writer and Peace Corps Ecuador volunteer who wrote about his experience in *The Making of an Un-American*.