



and are essential to Ecuador's economy. It was really neat to see how roses are grown and to see the whole process. Meeting the Ecuador Girl Guides was definitely a highlight of my trip. I will always remember the warmth and excitement we were greeted with when we arrived. I realized how much Girl Guides bonds girls internationally and in our own communities. I had a chance to trade my old pathfinders scarf with a young brownie and she was very grateful for it. This trip was an incredible experience for me and I am very excited that other girls will have the chance to go on this trip again next year. I have learnt so much from my journey that I hope to spread to my friends in Guiding. The facts of poverty around the world really startled me and gave me a new appreciation for how lucky I really am.

While in Ecuador I had an opportunity to help a small community build their communal kitchen, along with Me to We. The community I worked in was called Gulahuayco, and was definitely full of spirit and delightful people. The community has a population of 500 people with about 160 children. 99 percent of the population lives on less than three dollars per day and no one currently has access to electricity or indoor plumbing. The men are mostly migrant workers so the women run all the operations and events within the community. The community members currently make money by subsistence farming and trading goods at the local market weekly. It amazed me that the community had been working on the school buildings daily since February and are still determined and working hard. Daily we worked in the community, sanding roof tiles and hauling large rocks to make up the floor. It was very exhausting, but rewarding work and I am very glad to have this opportunity. I was amazed at how hard-working and strong the people of the community were. They did twice as much work as us and didn't even seem tired! While in the community we had the opportunity to experience a "minga" which means a big gathering of community members for a common cause. People from all over the area came to the minga to help us build the school and kitchen building. After the minga, everyone met in the community center to thank us for our help. Throughout the meeting we had a chance to dance with the community children, which is an experience I will never forget. We were thanked by everyone, from children who attended Free The Children schools, to Mom's who were excited to break the cycle of poverty for their children. At the end of the trip we had a chance to reflect on our

experiences at the beautiful cloud forest in Northern Ecuador. It was a wonderful time to see wildlife and get ready to come home. This trip has changed my priorities and values. I now hope to create awareness throughout my friends and other youth within my community & GGC.

I hope to continue travelling with Free The Children and the Girl Guides of Canada in the future and help more people to become successful. Free The Children is an incredible organization. I was impressed by how they reach out to communities and help them in a responsible manner. Sustainable development is a huge part of Free The Children's philosophy. They try to plant trees, build greenhouses and implement small businesses within communities, so each community can become self-sufficient after Free The Children leaves. This trip has really opened my eyes to other cultures and I strongly encourage Girl Guides to continue this partnership as I think it is very beneficial to both groups and we can learn a lot from each other. Thank you for this amazing opportunity!

