Luisa Antunes Garcia de Campos  
Summer Program 2010: Tropical Disease Research Program

Have you ever thought about going to foreign country? Have you ever considered learning about a different culture and a different life style? Have you ever thought about working as a volunteer for very low income communities? The answers to all these questions were my motivation when I decided to go to Ecuador this summer.

Today, Chagas Disease represents one of the most serious health problems in Latin America and in Ecuador. The Tropical Disease Program in Ecuador offers students the opportunity to provide help to low income communities that face Chagas. During the summer we visited 13 rural communities in Loja province affected by Chagas. A project was developed with four components (entomological, clinics, Hospital and the health living component) to assist them.

I believe that this volunteer work done in Ecuador changed my perception on my role as a member of society. We are not aware of the current situation of most people that live in Latin America countries unless we actually go there and experience it. Having direct contact with the local people and interacting with them provided me a better understanding of the holistic scenario that involves Latin America. Most of these communities’ members, don’t realize how much our short and long term actions to prevent Chagas can help their life quality. Unfortunately Chagas is a disease of poverty, and although it is hard to combat, we have to believe that “CON NUESTRA LABOR, SIN CHAGAS EN ECUADOR”!!!!!!