

Ecuador

SIM ministries in Ecuador include involvement in church planting, leadership training, student outreach, and radio ministry.

Ecuador is a small nation boasting the magnificent peaks of the Andean range which separates the muggy coastal plains of the west from the steamy Amazonian jungles on the east. Ecuador is 95% Catholic, though in practice this is often mingled with indigenous beliefs.

SIM serves the Ecuadorian people in four cities through a variety of ministries which meet human needs and strengthen the church. These ministries include community service, AIDS outreach, leadership development, discipleship, Missions mobilisation, and radio and evangelism outreach.

Current SIM Ministry

SIM has been working in Ecuador since 1989, concentrating on church planting and ministry to human needs. The country attracted the attention of the Christian world in 1956 with the martyrdom of five missionaries by the Auca (Waoorani) tribe. Since then, most ethnic groups of Ecuador have been evangelised to some extent. Five groups are still considered unreached. The country officially has religious freedom, although it is strongly Roman Catholic, and active opposition to evangelical witness exists.



In Guayaquil, where more than 60% of the people are extremely poor and many live in slums built on a polluted marsh, SIM partners with an Ecuadorian Christian organisation ministering to people living with HIV & AIDS.



The city and province of Loja are recognised as particularly unreached with the Gospel, with less than 0.1% evangelicals. In Loja, SIM has initiated a co-operative community ministry and is participating with other missions and local churches in radio, evangelism, and holistic church planting. The united effort, called Operación Esperanza (Operation Hope), is already increasing our effectiveness in reaching the area for Christ. Other ministries include Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), medical caravans, health and wellness education, student café, and discipleship.

We are also focused on assisting the Latin American mission movement, partnering with COMEC, a grassroots mission mobilisation organisation. We are working in Quito to mobilise churches for mission and to enable Ecuadorians to participate in the fulfilment of the Great Commission.



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History of Mission

The Roman Catholic church began work shortly after the Spanish conquest in 1532. The Diocese of Quito was established in 1545, and the first hospital in 1565. The evangelisation of the Amazon Region began in 1599. Over the next 200 years, infrastructure was built in the form of schools and colleges. By 1780, almost 900 priests and other religious personnel served in Quito alone. This number declined rapidly after independence in 1822.

The nineteenth century was a period of much conflict between the church and government. A new constitution clearly went against the church when it legalised divorce and again in 1908, when all church lands were appropriated by the government.

A period of stabilisation and growth has characterised the twentieth century. But for several years, the Diocese of Riobamba and its bishop were in strong contention with other bishops and the government over the issue of pastoral reforms and Indian rights. Some Ecuadorians are questioning the Roman Catholic Church.

The first Protestant missionary activity began in 1824 when a member of the British and Foreign Bible Society went to Ecuador to sell Bibles. No permanent mission was established until 1896 when three Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) missionaries began work. They arrived at the time the government repudiated the 1862 concordat with the Holy See. The GMU has actively served among the coastal Mestizos, the Jivaro Indians in the Amazon area, and mostly among the [Quechua](#) Indians in the Andes.

The Evangelical Missionary Union Church, begun by the GMU, is the largest Protestant church in Ecuador. They also started two Indian radio stations which are now under the leadership of Quechua believers. One of the largest Protestant broadcasting projects is HCJB ('Voice of the Andes'), located in Quito and owned by World Radio Missionary Fellowship. Started in 1931, it now broadcasts in 17 major languages, and is aired in short-wave, long-wave, and local radio programmes.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) began work in 1897. Although it is concentrated in the same areas as the GMU, it employs its staff largely at Alliance Academy in Quito, attended by missionary children from many missions, including SIM. Seventh-day Adventists arrived in 1905, but have not been as successful here among the Indian populations as in neighbouring countries. In 1945, four large United States denominations began work as the United Andean Indian Mission. Growth has been small.

In 1953, the Foursquare Gospel denomination began work and presently has the second largest Protestant church in Ecuador. The work grew rapidly after 1964. In 1956 the now-famous Auca Indians became known to the outside world with the martyrdom of five missionaries by this tribe. This story is recounted in the book, *Through Gates of Splendour*. Most of the Auca, who are more appropriately called the Waoorani, and other small tribes have indigenous churches now. Forty-eight mission agencies serve in Ecuador as of 1997.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for missions and religious organisations to receive legal standing in Ecuador. Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses are numerous, and these groups as well as evangelicals are all lumped into 'sects' as far as the Catholic Church is concerned.

Unreached People

There are five people groups for whom less than 20% of its population has any affiliation with a Christian church. Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons, and Jehovah Witnesses are increasingly encountered. A huge need for more evangelical work in the Catholic areas also exists.

The State Church

Prior to 1896, the Roman Catholic Church was the State Church. Presently the state recognises no religion, but gives freedom for each person to exercise his religious beliefs. However, in practice some persecution still exists.

Please pray for

- El Sendero (student café): for many students to come to know Christ through the café, for the Loja church to catch the vision, and for more Ecuadorian volunteers.
- Operation Hope to reach the Loja area for Christ through community services, counselling, radio, evangelism, discipleship, medical caravans, health and wellness education, and teaching English.
- Radio Hope - that its broadcasts can reach the entire Loja province, for an increasing audience, and for God's work in their lives.
- AIDS ministry: that many would come to know Christ; for families affected by AIDS to receive spiritual, emotional, and physical help. for many more missionaries to help effectively spread the Gospel in Ecuador.
- mission mobilisation: assisting churches to fulfil the Great Commission and helping Latin Americans go into mission.
- the spiritual formation of each missionary and the Ecuadorian Christians whom they mentor.

Opportunities

[Junior/Senior High School Teacher](#)

[El Sendero Ministry Worker](#)

[All Ecuador Opportunities](#)

Projects

[Radio Hope](#)

[Loja Cafe and Student Centre](#)

Stories

[Medical Aid for Spiritual Impact](#)