

# Adventure in Ecuador



CHILE | November 22

Maria

**M**aria embarked on a new path of faith after her little sister, Angel, recovered from liver cancer. She believed that the God of the Seventh-day Adventists had answered her prayers, and she and her family joined the Adventist Church.

But joining the church didn't seem like enough. God had done so much for her, and she wanted to do something more for Him.

Maria was helping at-risk children as a social worker in Chile. It was a good job, she made good money, and she had good friends.

One day, a friend asked, "Would you like to move to another country to work as a missionary?"

The friend invited Maria to sign up for Adventist Volunteer Service, the Adventist world church's program for mission volunteers.

Then Maria attended an Adventist youth congress where the speaker also made an appeal for missionaries.

Maria couldn't refuse. She prayed, "Here I am. Send me, Lord."

Maria found herself serving for a year with Adventist Volunteer Service in Ecuador. She was to use her social-work background to counsel children and teach classes at an Adventist school in Santo Domingo, Ecuador's fourth-largest city.

At first, it was difficult for Maria to adjust to life in a new country. She missed her parents and two sisters terribly.

She also struggled to adapt to her surroundings. Ecuador and Chile are on the same South American continent, but they seemed like worlds apart. For one thing, she found Ecuadorian meals to be tasty but very different. In Chile, people ate a light breakfast of yogurt, bread, tea, and maybe fruit. In Ecuador, breakfast consisted of rice, beans, and fried plantains. The big Ecuadorian breakfast looked more like lunch to the missionary from Chile.

Then there were mosquitoes. The pests seemed to be everywhere. Maria used mosquito repellent, but it didn't seem to help. Bites covered her body.



The climate was also different. Maria was used to Chile's hot, dry summers and cold winters. Ecuador was always tropical, with high humidity and lots of rain.

As the weeks passed, Maria began to adjust to her new surroundings, and she loved serving God at the school.

Many children at the school came from an indigenous people known as the Tsáchila, which means "true people." Indigenous men dyed their hair a reddish-orange and wore horizontally striped black-and-white skirts. Women wore skirts that were brightly colored with horizontal stripes.

The children learned about Jesus at school and also at the church's Pathfinder club. Then they went home and taught their parents about what they had heard. Maria was amazed to see children and their parents growing closer to God through her work at the school.

Maria's activities went beyond teaching. She joined a church group that visited a rehab center for alcoholics every week. At the center, she gave Bible studies and played games with people. A number of those people gave their hearts to Jesus in baptism.

Maria also regularly visited a children's home, where she told Bible stories and put on skits with the children.

As the year passed, Maria was amazed to see that God was revealing spiritual gifts that she hadn't known that she had. She had understood that she had a gift for reaching minds through teaching, but she hadn't realized that she also had a gift for reaching hearts through exhortation (see Romans 12:6–8). She had always been shy, but now she was learning to speak about God at school and elsewhere. She shared her personal testimony at various churches. She told how she had prayed for God to save her little sister's life when she was ill with liver cancer. She described how God had answered their prayers and she and her family had joined the Adventist Church. Maria was surprised to see that a testimony as simple as hers could change hearts with

## Story Tips

- Show South America and Chillán, Chile, on the map.
- Pronounce Tsáchila as: SA-chee-la.
- Download photos for this story from Facebook: [bit.ly/fb-mq](https://bit.ly/fb-mq).

## Fast Facts

- Chile's most famous poet is Pablo Neruda (1904–1973), who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971. The three homes he owned in Chile (in Isla Negra, Santiago, and Valparaíso) are now museums and popular tourist destinations.
- Chile is a long narrow country on the west coast of South America, between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains.
- The national language of Chile is Spanish.

the help of the Holy Spirit.

It was hard when the year ended. Maria didn't want to leave her mission field.

But then she found a new mission field. After returning to Chile, she was offered a job as student counselor and teacher at Chile Adventist University. She was delighted!

"I fulfilled a mission in Ecuador, and now this is my mission field," she said. 🌐

Part of this quarter's Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, also known as the Quarterly Mission Project Offering, will go to Chile Adventist University, where Maria teaches. The university plans to open an Adventist Volunteer Service center that will send 30 missionaries to different parts of the world every year. The center will have five classrooms for training students to be missionaries and an auditorium with 250 seats. Thank you for planning a generous offering.