COMING OUT ON TOP
Saraguro Caton, Ecuador

There are not many civilizations that can claim they avoided conquest during the Spanish invasion of South America in the mid-1500s, but the Saraguro people of Ecuador may be one of them. Located in the southern Andes mountains, their ability to band together to defend their people and their land centuries ago contributes to the continuation of their lively and distinct indigenous culture today.

As John Allison, an anthropology researcher who studied the Saraguro people, has said, “The Saraguros were fierce warriors and the Spanish were content to keep their distance so long as they received a share of the produce... Records indicated that in armed conflict, the Saraguros often came out on top. In a real sense, they were never really conquered.”

Much of the Saraguro culture hearkens back to the culture of the Incas. Similar to the Incan tradition, the Saraguros work within an agricultural system that emphasizes the interconnectedness of families, neighbors and the community. This interconnection and sense of community - of sharing, reciprocity and internal strong families - is part of what has helped the Saraguros overcome in the past and continue moving forward today.

Today, many of the canton's approximately 30,000 inhabitants make a living through farming, raising livestock and several industrial arts - weaving, bead work, embroidery, and carpentry - though some are employed in health care, teaching and other professions as well. They continue to reach out to help each other as families, neighbors and friends.

Working with the Charity Anywhere Foundation Globus Relief was able to support two shipments to further assist the people of the Saraguro region. The shipments, containing medical instruments, wheelchairs, hygiene kits, diapers, and dental equipment, were distributed amongst the community. The Charity Anywhere Foundation has also completed medical missions and other local projects using medical goods provided by Globus Relief. Like the Saraguro people of centuries ago and of today, we believe that when we serve each other as family and neighbors, we all come out on top.