

## **MONEY**

Ecuador's currency is the U.S. dollar. Yes, you did read that right! They switched from their sucre to using the U.S. dollar in September 2000.

**How should I take my money down?** We do not recommend that you take down a lot of cash. Small bills are most easily used, \$1-\$10; larger bills are harder to use, \$20, and larger bills \$50 and higher bring suspicion or refusal of acceptance in smaller businesses. Sufficient change on hand is always an issue in Ecuador whether it's the grocery store, the corner market or a restaurant, and sometimes even the banks...for some reason, they just keep very little change on hand, and if you don't have small bills and coins, you might run into difficulty making purchases or getting adequate change back.

It's recommended that you have money available to you through an ATM (a debit or credit card) that you can withdraw as you need it. If you get in a pinch you can have someone wire you money via Western Union. VISA and MasterCard credit/debit cards usually work well in the ATMs with those logos.

You can take down Traveler's Checks, which is the most reliable and safest way but a big hassle to cash/exchange. You cannot use Traveler's Checks as cash in Ecuador like you can in the U.S.—you must exchange your Traveler's Checks first. If needed, our Project Directors will show you where this can be done and tell you when it can be done so you can plan for this.

**Can I use my credit/debit card to make purchases?** In general, most volunteers use a debit card to withdraw money from an ATM to have cash available for making purchase since most places volunteers shop don't accept credit/debit cards. Credit/debit cards are usually accepted at nicer places (supermarkets, restaurants, nice stores), but this payment option is sometimes "down" so you should always have a backup payment option available.