

Hope can be found in the most unusual places

Chris Sheldon - Hudson River Presbytery

For the week of May 29-June 8, a group from the Hudson River Presbytery visited Peru. Here is an excerpt from one of their blogs.

Though I wish I had a better word for them, every so often squatters' villages appear – "settlements" they call them. People have moved from the Andes, looking for work in a place where there is none. They are willing to claim parcels of land, hoping to wait the 10 years it takes to gain a title to the property. Homes are built from found materials, woven cane leaves, and un-reinforced adobe bricks. We stopped to visit in one of Chinchá's many neighborhoods. A little village area, with about 150 families, has gathered around a water-tower built with funds from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Yolanda was clearly the spokeswoman and spirit of her family. She greeted us warmly as we stumbled from the bus. I couldn't help but be amazed at her pride and poise, even in such humble conditions. And then, she invited us to see the toilet. The toilet was ecologically built – sending urine off one way for plant irrigation, and allowing solid wastes to be composted. A box of ash was on hand to be used after each visit – keeping away insects, and cutting odors. It was a small part of a larger journey of overcoming – a witness to the new day that was being born from the rubble. There was not a stroke of embarrassment in Yolanda's tour. Though

we were
strangers,
we were
welcome into

that most private place to bear witness to her humanity, her spirit of survival, and her trust that the story doesn't end here. Yolanda has something to teach us all, and not just about toilets. God's Spirit brings life into every corner of our lives – even the most private, even the most forgotten places. Anywhere we see the Spirit at work, we should celebrate it. Each time we do, we bring life into some forgotten desert...and bear witness to the Resurrection once more.

For more of Chris' reflections on this trip, [click here](#) (posts between 5/30 and 6/8)

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Links

manosperu.org/
fairtradeperu.com
cambialo.org/
kidsforlaoroya.org/
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Photo: Chris Sheldon

NY to Perú: Members of the Hudson River Presbytery visit the artisan group El Mercurio during their week long trip to Peru.

Grave danger due to leak in Huancavelica

Conrado Olivera - Red Uniendo Manos Peru

On June 25, there was a collapse of a mineral waste storage location, that has produced a leak that comes from the mining company Caudalosa S.A. in the districts of Huachocolpa

and Angaraes in the department of Huancavelica, thus contaminating the Escalera, Huachacolpa, Opamayo, Lircay, Cachi, Urubamba and Mantaro rivers.

This disaster has come as a surprise to those who live along the river and clearly shows the weaknesses in the process of supervision and control by state agencies, such as: the Agency for Assessment and Environmental Control, the Supervising Agency for the Investment in Energy and Mines- OSINERGMIN.

Only after 11 days of unattended con-

tamination did the Ministry of the Environment designate the area as a 90 day environmental emergency and through RM MINA 117-2010 could they adopt a plan of action to reclaim the area.

Therefore, the Ministry of the Environment, in coordination with other state entities, must implement an immediate, short term action plan within the next few days. The laws dictate that in this case the Ministry of Energy and Mining must take the necessary steps for environmental mitigation, remediation, and compensation in the affected zone, which should be implemented by the Caudalosa S.A. mining company.

Meanwhile, life is dying out along the 70km of affected river systems, destroying the living beings in the river systems and expanding its damage to the land as well (affecting plants, cultivated agriculture and domesticated animals), including the affected human



Photo: ATTYPAQ

Dead Fish: One of the many affected by this mining tragedy shows a dead fish from the contaminated rivers

Serve and change

Debbie Horne - Peru YAV Coordinator

"A year of service for a lifetime of change" - the motto of the Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) Program of the PC(USA).

Within the first hour of September 1st, 2009, six tired and expectant young adult volunteers arrived in Lima, Peru. In spite of their exhaustion, they were happy to be here and were excited about the beginning of their year of service in Peru as a YAV. I imagine that there were a number of other things going around in their minds at that time, too, including wondering just exactly what lay ahead for them this year in Peru.

Now, as the year draws to a close, I sit here contemplating on these 6 young folks and remembering their tired, happy, and expectant faces upon their arrival almost 11 months ago. Just what did they expect during their year here? Have their hopes and dreams been fulfilled? Dashed? Are they returning to the U.S.A. after their year of service hopeful and changed because of their experience in Peru?

Here there are smaller and younger faces of hope, but also tired, happy and expectant.

They are the children of the TAMAR Association. They are children who are victims, survivors, of sexual abuse, who receive shelter, along with educational and psychological help from Paz y Esperanza in Huánuco, Peru. They are tired of being poor, of being used and abused by their aggressors. At the same time, they are happy and hopeful, thanks to the ongoing work of Paz y Esperanza and Sarah Chancellor, who has worked with them this year and has been a part of giving hope for their futures through her

work and play, and presence.

They are the children of the Compassion International Program in a church in Collique, Lima, a member of Fraternidad Cristiana Vida. They are tired, tired of living in extreme poverty, struggling just to have the basic necessities in life like running water, electricity and food 3 times a day. They receive Christian and secular education along with a good nutritious lunch through the Compassion International Collique Program. YAV Ginna Irby accompanied them this year. They learned what it means to follow Christ and for someone from the U.S. to genuinely care about them and want a good life for each one. Ginna's work with the children and their families in this poor area of Lima has given them more hope.

They are the children of the CAMBIALO project in La Oroya. They are children whose very lives are threatened by the contamination of the Doe Run Peru smelter. They are tired of living with lead in their blood and contaminated air. They are also tired of the conflicts that have been going on for years now between Doe Run, the workers, and the government, and want it all to be resolved in a way that will provide them with healthy bodies and clean air. With the work of the Red Uniendo Manos, Filomena Tomaira Pacsi, and YAVs Joe Tobiason and Anna Gray, these children of La Oroya feel happier and more hopeful and believe that change is coming for them.

"A year of service for a lifetime of change." Yes, indeed!



Photos: Sarah Chancellor

YAVS: the YAVs together at Christmas and in Ayacucho for Holy Week

There is an alternative

Jorge Travezano - Bridge of Hope

Primarily, in countries in Europe and North America, many consumers know that products are sold just too cheap for the people who live in the developing countries who made those products to live a dignified life. Many of these clients want to help, but do not have the

knowledge nor information about Fair Trade. These wild times of globalization and limitless liberalization that has been accented in the last 20 years have distorted the real significance of the Fair Trade movement. It has been used by the large companies and major corporations as a marketing ploy and does not respect the principles of Fair Trade and much less the real lives of the producers.

Here in Peru, the majority of the population has learned to navigate their poverty and survive, but we face major challenges of dissemination, promotion and practice of Fair Trade on the local and national level which will allow many

more people and consumers to understand the purpose for this trade alternative which is based on skill development and enabling communities to participate in their own development, and to do this while satisfying the needs of the consumer. This will build characteristics of equality and respect between the producers of the global south and consumers of the global north.

The strategies that we propose for the development of a Fair Trade focus are four-fold:

1. Development of the person – especially the empowerment of women in order that they are capable of generating income and fundamentally supporting their family
2. Development of producing groups – strengthens the activity and promotes a participating environment with transparent management and leadership that supports all.
3. Local development vision – promote the producers to be developing actors in their own communities
4. Market development – promoting markets (national and international) that seek sustainability in the workshops of the producers and in Fair Trade itself.



Knitting Away: members of El Mucurio working hard Photo: Eva-Maria Kuntz

NGOs petition to State for D.R.P. to respect laws

Conrado Olivera - Red U.M.P.

July 27, 2010 will be the end of the period that has been determined by the Peruvian State as the last date which the company can standardize its operations in La Oroya and thus restore labor rights of workers and restart actions to ensure the completion of the Environmental Management and Mitigation Plan (PAMA), referring to the creation of a copper sulfuric acid plant and copper circuit modification. But whether that happens or not remains as of yet to be seen.

But, there remain a few additional items that Doe Run Peru has presented to the Peruvian State, such as seeking for the state to assume some of the financial and environmental burdens of mining, something that in the civil society is unacceptable.

This moved the population of La Oroya, with help from various members of the Catholic and Protestant Churches of Peru, in conjunction with

the Red Muqui, the Movement for Health in La Oroya, the Joining Hands Network of Peru, and various other organizations of the civil society to participate in a vigil in Lima and turned in a petition to the Peruvian Ministry of Mining, demanding the Peruvian Government to not give in to the new demands of the company because that would implicate the state in the environmental damage caused by Doe Run. For this, these organizations demand a firm stance from the government in order to respect national legislation and defend the health and environment of all Peruvians.

Among other items, they solicited: a reversal and modification in the contract of privatization of the La Oroya Metallurgical Complex "in order to shield the company from any legal liability for pollution and health damage," the exception of payment of unpaid environmental fines, flexibility in the payment of taxes to the state, and modification in the environmental standard, in a way that will only benefit Doe Run Peru.

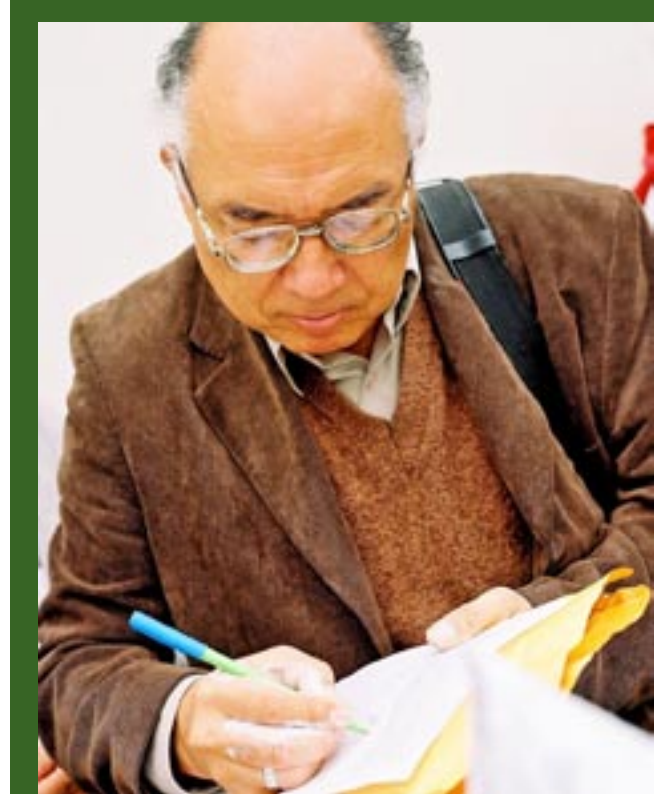


Photo: Joseph Tobiason

Signing the petition: A member of the Red Muqui signs a petition to the Peruvian State to make Doe Run Peru respect the laws

The Volunteers

Eva-Maria Kuntz

German volunteer for March through August 2010 working with the Fair Trade Program.

beginning there were 5, but within half an hour we had a crowd of 20 kids, jumping upon us, wanting a hugg and to be lifted up in the air and fooling around.

It was so amazing in what short amount of time they have developed a trust and a love for us that in the end (well after one hour) they did not want to let us go "no te vayas, no te vayas!!!" ("don't go!") was their chorus and I felt sad when we left them all standing there waving at us and asking "¿cuando regresas?" ("when do you return?") and we did not know what to answer so we just said "yo no se mañana...." ("I don't know about tomorrow" a line from a popular song in Peru).

Liz Toland

Columbia Theological Seminary student, working with the Red Uniendo Manos and Universidad Biblica de Latinoamerica

Our bus followed the Mantaro River through the Andes to La Oroya. We saw it turn a dark brown color and the mountains change from gray and green to white from contamination.

Our entrance into the city left me speechless and my eyes filled with tears. As we passed Doe Run Peru, the smelting plant that is responsible for so much of the contamination, there was little to say. We watched brown waste flowing from the pipes of the company into the murky waters of the Mantaro River. We passed the smoke stack that hovers over the mountain city of 33,000 people like a bully.

It felt hard to breathe, partly because of the high altitude, but mainly because the rush of anger and sadness was overwhelming. Is there hope? And then it passed us. Bright-eyed, smiling kids marching down the main road through town. These CAMBIALO kids are speaking up about the truth in La Oroya and they want everyone to hear their story. "It's not just that we're sick and you're healthy, but everyone is sick," one of the kids told us later. "We're all in this together."



Photo: Eva-Maria Kuntz



Photo: Joseph Tobiason

This week I got a chance to visit our knitting group, consisting of about 40 women, in the province of Huancavelica. After the usual shyness at the beginning their kids became aware of our presence and our "exoticness". Before we knew what was happening we were out there on the street playing with them. At the

Jill Verbeck

Public Health student at University of Arizona doing an internship with Filomena Tomaira Pacsi in La Oroya.

I came to La Oroya to complete an internship for a Master's Degree in Public Health and to work with the Mesa de Dialogo de Mujeres de Yauli-La Oroya, a group of women leaders from La Oroya and neighboring districts. The mesa promotes the well-being of women in five areas: health, employment, gender violence, political participation and the environment. The Mesa has identified the effect of environmental pollution on women's reproductive health as the most important issue to be analyzed and im-

proved. My role is to assist in the assessment of reproductive health services in the community and to work in collaboration with medical staff to create a guide for health providers promoting adequate provision of reproductive health services.

At the mention of La Oroya, images of environmental and economic injustice immediately come to mind. While this is a real part of life in La Oroya, I've been reminded that there are good people doing good work and I've been fortunate enough to live and work with some of these people who will succeed in creating a healthier, more just community.



Photo: Bexie Towle



Photo: Anna Gray

Joseph "Joe" Tobiason

Young Adult Volunteer from Seattle, WA working with the Red Uniendo Manos Peru and the NGO CENCA

One of the most impressive projects that have been fortunate enough to be involved in this year has been the CAMBIALO project. From the first day in December that we visited La Oroya to hold our first skype date, I knew something special was happening.

The kids were very nervous that day. They were shy and didn't know what to say to this strange computer and a little screen. I'm not sure if they really grasped that they were talking face to face with a class of kids on another continent in another hemisphere, but there were moments when they spoke up about their lives. That day Pamela, Vanesa, Aldair, and Alesandra gave me hope that something was happening here.

Fast forward 7 months and I cannot be more proud of the CAMBIALO kids and how they

have grown. They now are excited to film and be filmed. They are proud of their city but want it to be better. They are full of self confidence and joy and I really cannot wait to see what this group of kids is going to do in the next 7 months.

For the going away party for me and other volunteers, their smiles were huge as they danced traditional dances and pulled us up to dance right along side them. There was no fear as cameras recorded Bryan reciting poems or Aldair singing his favorite Cumbia song. This is development, coming alongside people and seeing growth happen.

For more information and to see how you can help out, go to cambialo.org or kidsforlaoroya.org and follow them on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com), [twitter](https://www.twitter.com) and [flickr](https://www.flickr.com).