

Peru

September 2017



Sunday 10th September 2017 – the start of our adventure

Claire Drummond

Over the weekend, we all arrived into Lima getting excited to start our trek. Some of us wandered the city and took in the local sites and cultures. We were all in Lima by Sunday evening and enjoyed a lovely meal – our first sample of local food. It was great fun to meet everyone, learning our office location, department, who had the best / worst travel experience to get to Lima and our expectations for the week. I think most expectations were exceeded for everyone. The anticipation was high.

Monday 11th September – meeting the pupils

Sarah Cansfield

The volunteering trip to Peru to visit the project funded by Aberdeen's Charity Foundation began with a quick breakfast, followed by a slow journey through the heavy Lima traffic to the office of CESIP, ChildHope's local charity partner.

CESIP provided us with an introduction to the charity and an overview and update of the project funded by Aberdeen's Charity Foundation. The mission of the project is to create safer school environments by promoting the protection of children and young people against mistreatment, sexual abuse and child labour.

Targeted support is being provided to eight schools in the poorest communities around Lima. The first three days of the week will be spent in two of these schools so that we could see first-hand the project in practice. CESIP stated that they have already had positive results from the implementation of the project and impressively the project has, to date, provided education and support to a total of 8,905 children, parents and teachers. To learn more about CESIP's other initiatives, the last two days of the trip will be spent in Cusco to visit an evening school for adults.

The two schools visited in Lima were located in the Huachipa, in the outskirts the district. The last leg of the drive was bumpy and adventurous, and we even had to drive through a river to access the village! We went to the larger of the two schools first and arrived to an energetic welcome; the pathway to the school was lined with students on either side waving balloons and cheering. Swiftly after this, we split into two groups and Flora, Rowan, Dan and I were taken to the second school. We arrived to another lovely welcome and then helped with an art class and made origami, spoke to a class about our home countries and then helped to paint a mural on the school wall. The image for the mural was selected through a competition and the purpose behind the mural is for the children to have a daily reminder to treat everyone fairly and equally.

Our day finished off with a city tour of Lima, followed by dinner and a Peruvian dance, music and folklore show. To Shyra, Andrew and my delight we each got pulled up on stage during the show. My attempt at the Peruvian shuffle dance was questionable to say the least!



Tuesday 12th September – helping out in the classroom

Manuele Ambrosini

At 8am, our bus picked us up outside our hotel in Miraflores. We departed for the two schools located in Huachipa – El Paraiso and Alto Peru. The group was again divided into two sub-groups – ten to go to the bigger school and four to go to the smaller school.

We arrived at the schools at around 9:30am after creeping through Lima traffic. In the bigger El Paraiso School, we were split up again into pairs to divide and conquer various activities. Some of us participated in the mural painting session, which was a large painting on the entrance wall.

The theme is one that is reoccurring of good behavior, staying together and helping each other. The rest of us were divided up amongst the classrooms where there were primary school classes (6-10 years) and secondary school classes (11-16 years).

With the primary school children, we passed through two different classes where we had to present on our origin countries. This involved telling the children about habits and customs, language, animals and typical foods. The conversations would then progress to child rights, students and parents working together, good habits, respect and changing mind-sets. There was lots of drawing, dancing, singing and acting to try and engage with the children.

With the secondary school children, things were a bit more serious. After the presentations of our home countries and habits, we conducted some basic English lessons and assisted students with some maths lessons.

The morning flew by and before we knew it, it was lunch time. The yard would come alive with squeals, shouts and laughter and we'd join them and have fun with all the kids together.

In the afternoon, in the younger classes there was a session with the parents and children together. The teachers play a crucial role here where they educate the parents on child rights, and the values of union, love and collaboration. This is where teachers employed by CESIP (the local Peruvian NGO that we were supporting) are not limited to a role of just pure teachers, they also play the role of the main advocator for the child and the middle man between parent and child. The purpose of this is to educate on the importance of keeping their children in school instead of sending them to work to earn money.

In the smaller school, Alto Peru, we had the opportunity to get a better understanding of what a full day looks like at this school. We participated in a cultural exchange session, explaining what life is like in our home countries and continued to work on our mural. It was great to see how creative the children are with their classroom artwork and their progress on the mural. The children also showed us how to create Kirigami, a form of paper folding art.

The second day came to an end with the whole Aberdeen group gathering to start preparation for the next day – our challenge was to each think of a myth/legend from our respective home countries and then draw this and present it to the children the next day. In Spanish!

We returned to Lima that evening with a sense of achievement and gratitude mainly from being able to start forming connections and relationships with both the students and the teachers.

Wednesday 13th September – Sports Day

Rowan Hastie Smith

Wednesday was another action-packed day. After a rather bumpy journey fighting through the traffic of Lima, we arrived feeling well-rested and ready for our final day of volunteering in Lima. The majority of the group had spent the previous evening preparing (not without panic I must add) to present and act out some classic myths and legends to the children such as Tam O'Shanter, The Three Little Pigs and Turtle and the Hare which the children thoroughly enjoyed. There were even some renditions of Flower of Scotland and Pavarotti belted from individuals...

We then had the opportunity to attend a session with the teachers and some of the children's parents, where they were taught about the importance of showing your (should be their instead) children love and affection – something many children in Peru unfortunately don't experience or simply understand. The session was extremely interesting and informative for us, as we were able to have more of an insight into the backgrounds of the children that we had spent time getting to know during the week.

The rest of the afternoon entailed groups in both schools finished painting their murals and were presented, very kindly, by CESIP with plaques which will remain displayed on the school walls beside the murals. The children's parents were then invited to school to join in on a sports and activities day which ensured that not only the children and parents participated, but also our group! After an afternoon of activities: including singing, skipping, egg and spoon racing, frantic balloon popping and a very special dance off, there was a long-awaited football match organised for us against the children.

After countless cuddles, selfies and even 'autograph' signing we waved goodbye to the children of the Lurigancho-Chosica district and headed back to Lima for our final night experiencing the 'bright lights' of Lima. Our evening activity entailed a tour of the historical Huaca Pucllana ruins which is a clay pyramid located in the Miraflores district of central Lima, built from seven staggered platforms. It served as an important ceremonial and administrative centre between the years of 200- 700 AD. We then had a delicious dinner at the ruins on-site restaurant, where we had the opportunity to sample some local Peruvian cuisine such as Ceviche, Alpaca and, for the brave members of the group, guinea pig!

The evening was rounded up with a night out in Barranco. The area is considered to be the city's most "romantic and bohemian", being the home and working place of many of Peru's leading artists, musicians, designers and photographers. However, as the group discovered, as soon the sun goes down Barranco awakes and becomes a central spot for night life in Lima.

Thursday 14th September – night school

Celia Rodgers

On Thursday, we made the journey from Lima to Cusco. The altitude of Cusco is over 11,000 feet, which meant many of us had to take time to acclimatize. Unfortunately, the coca leaf tea didn't do the job for the entire group so some slept while the others explored the city until we made our short journey to the night school, CEBA Diego Quispe Tito in the San Sebastian region of the city.

The night school goes from 6:30pm to 9:30pm. It is meant to serve teenagers over 14 who have had to leave school to work; however, there were children as young as ten in the classes we taught. The bright smiles and positive energy made it difficult to believe the students had spent the entire day laying bricks or cleaning houses. In three different classes, we did English exercises which included playing "head, shoulders, knees, and toes" and singing English songs. One of my favorite parts of our time at the school was acting out different animals and having the students say the name of the animal in English. This exercise made everyone laugh, I particularly enjoyed watching Shyra pretend to be a chicken. All in all, their enthusiasm to learn after such a long day was nothing short of inspiring.

Friday 15th September – final day

Claire Drummond

Today we enjoyed a day out of the city all together. We left Cusco and stopped in Chincerro, a weaving community where we got a demonstration of how the colours are created for the wools

We enjoyed wandering the shop of all the locally made goods and bargaining with the ladies to get the price – some people were better than others at this game. Back onto the bus and taken to the salt mines next which are spectacular.



Stopped en route to the next attraction to see some of the amazing views of the Sacred Valley.

Our tour guide then took us to Moray which is another amazing place in the Sacred Valley. Some more fantastic heritage architecture for us to enjoy. Back onto the bus and back to Cusco. The afternoon was spent by us all in different ways – some resting, some enjoying the sights Cusco has to offer, some eating and drinking. All enjoyed the free time, ready to leave at 7pm for our trip to the Education Centre. We were shown around the centre, where teaching had finished for the day so didn't meet any pupils. There is a cook school where young adults come to learn to cook and bake, there is an area where hospitality is taught and a computer lab which is open all day and enrolled students can come and use the computers during the day, there are also times when classes take place in the computer lab. On the downstairs there is a nursery and pre-school room so parents can come to school and know the children are being well looked after and are close by should the mother require to breastfeed and simply want to see their child(ren) during class. This in itself brings learning opportunities, as the staff share skills which parents can use at home in various areas – feeding, sleeping, interaction etc. They engage with both parents as the culture in Peru is weighted towards the mother being the one to bring up the child, so fathers are encouraged to come in as well to learn to be part of the child upbringing and be a positive influence.

Great to see another project which CESIP is supporting.

We enjoyed a final dinner altogether and some of the group experienced a local night club...



Favourite moments and final thoughts...

Maureen Crocker

I have travelled around the world and have to say our trip to Peru was one of the most memorable ones for me. It was a week which I will cherish forever. I will cherish it for many reasons but mainly for the 13 amazing Aberdeen co-workers who I had the pleasure to work with side by side, laugh, and learn from. I feel as if they will be friends for life. More importantly I feel as if the work we did with the children in both schools truly made a difference in not only the children's lives but the teachers and parents. To see kids who have so little be so happy and appreciative of our work was refreshing! Even though my Spanish was very poor and their English not so great we were able to communicate just fine. It is amazing to see how a smile or warm touch brings out the best in everyone. I will never forget the welcome they gave us the first day we arrived. I felt so honoured and lucky to have been chosen for this mission. My hope is that Aberdeen will continue the work we are doing in third world countries and making a difference one child at a time.

Dan Egan

I have found that having a working knowledge of Spanish and understanding some of the cultural differences goes a long way in Peru. Whether it came to writing nouns on a classroom board during a English-language exercise in Cusco, getting an origami lesson from a student in Lima, finding a U.S. coin in my backpack and explaining visual differences between currencies to a class, or assisting a teacher with the setup of a projector and troubleshooting a few technological issues she faced, I feel that my ability to speak the language has enriched both experiences sevenfold.

Laughter was fairly common, between the odd nature of pronunciation found in English vocabulary during the lessons and my Spanish at all times with the slight miscommunication that occasionally ensued. I think that this lightened the atmosphere for a few of the students, especially those who were more reserved.

Despite the challenges people face in the regions we visited, particularly in the industrial regions on the outskirts of Lima, we were always met with generosity, a positive attitude and a smile.

Yuki Meyer

It is very difficult to put into words how great this experience was for me. I was part of the group that was placed at school 'El Paraiso' outside of Lima. It was very humbling to see how excited the children were about our visit, and how curious they were about the countries we came from. Language barriers were overcome through improvising on the spot and there was no shortage of creativity among the Aberdeen volunteers here. There may have been little that we could really teach the children academically over such a short period of time, but I felt that the most important contribution we made was to spend time together and entice the children's interest in the world outside of the isolated community they live in. I never thought that little things such as showing a 10 yen coin would cause so much excitement that children would start fighting over who gets to see it first! I was also impressed by the work that the principal of the school, in conjunction with CESIP/ChildHope has been doing on promoting better treatment of children including efforts to reduce child labour. All in all, it was an unforgettable experience and an honour to work with so many amazing people.

Madeleine Carpenter

My experience going to Peru with fellow Aberdeen colleagues was absolutely incredible and a truly amazing learning opportunity. While there were many wonderful memories getting to know everyone on the trip, my favorite moments were with the primary school students in Huachipa. The children were so sweet and caring, and very excited to share with us stories about Peruvian culture and hear about our home countries. They were full of questions about every aspect of our daily lives, and were equally excited to tell us about their own. In addition, the school and teachers' focus on the good treatment of children and helping the kids understand their rights was very powerful to see in action, with students being advocates for one another. Spending time in Huachipa shifted my perspective on my own experiences growing up, and reaffirmed my understanding of the importance of Aberdeen's partnerships with organizations such as CESIP and ChildHope.

Rowan Hastie Smith

As a whole, volunteering with Child Hope in Peru was one of the most rewarding and insightful I experiences that I have had. Being able to see first-hand the difference that charities such as CESIP are making to the lives of young Peruvians was something that can't be understood on paper, in pictures or even described. It has to be experienced. The opportunity of education is something that many of us take for granted. Therefore for me, the main takeaway from my time spent with the children, was learning how much value they put on their personal education. Instead of playing truant, something which is fairly common amongst teenagers in western cultures, we were working with children who had often come straight to the classroom from a twelve hour day of hard-labour – because they truly want a chance at life. Many of them spoke of their future aspirations to become lawyers, bankers and engineers. Which, thanks to the hard-work from their wonderful teachers, volunteers and CESIP, isn't simply a pipe-dream.

Celia Rodgers

The trip was one of the best experiences I have had during my five years at Aberdeen. Not everyone knew each other going into the trip, as the group had representatives from across the globe, from Australia to Japan to Italy to the UK to the US, but by the end of the trip the group felt more like a big eclectic family than a random set of colleagues. However, it was the people of Huachipa, the mothers, teachers, and children, as well as the students in Cusco, who were truly uplifting. The infrastructure of Huachipa was demolished last year when El Nino caused terrible rains to pour down in a typically dry region of Peru, yet everyone with whom we met appeared undeterred by the destruction that happened and were some of the kindest people I have ever met. The students in Cusco had worked all day but were still so eager to learn. I was humbled to see the work ChildHope is doing with the donations from Aberdeen to improve literacy and promote children's rights and I hope it is a program we continue to support.

Lochlan Kerr

I am very grateful to have had the chance to see first-hand the impact of Aberdeen's charitable giving in Peru. ChildHope were fantastic hosts and were closely partnered with a local charity focussed on empowering students from lower socioeconomic areas. The children in Peru were naturally curious about the bus full of gringos arriving at their school and happily shared with us Peruvian dances, stories and food. These old traditions seemed to be far more embraced and engrained in daily life than in western countries. I would recommend anyone visiting Peru to learn some beginner's Spanish...I unsuccessfully tried to teach a class about Australian animals using google translate! Turns out my attempted Spanish is beyond comprehension and the teacher had to go and find a translator! Gracias!

Shyra Muthusamy

The Childhope/CESIP trip to Peru was one of the most rewarding weeks that I have spent to date. One memory in particular that will always remain with me was our second day in Lima. This was our first full day at the schools and we spent the majority of the day in classrooms. Manu and I were very fortunate to be with the youngest students and in the afternoon, we had to teach them about our native animals. They each then had to draw a Peruvian animal, an Italian animal and an Australian animal. There was lots of hopping, flapping, squawking and squealing! I can't imagine what we looked like (and I definitely don't want to!) but most importantly, we were able to start developing connections with the children. Overall, the trip for me resulted in personal growth, a sharp reminder of humility and a strong sense of gratitude. #firstworldproblems became much more real and it was astounding to see children, who have so much less yet have endured so much more, welcome us without hesitation and with love and respect. El buen trato. They taught me much more than I taught them. It was a very special week and I've also returned with 14 new friends – no escape guys!

Sylva Tran

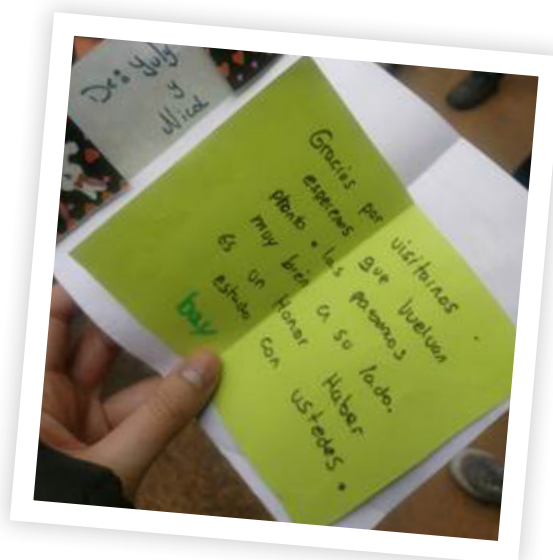
My favourite memory from the trip to Peru was going to the schools in Lima and interacting with the kids during lessons and through playing sports such as football and volleyball. I was overwhelmed by the hospitality that the school children and the teachers provided for us. Even though we visited for only three days, it was clear that we made an impact on the children's lives simply by cultural exchange, spending our time with them and letting them know that they are valued and appreciated. An example of a positive impact was shown to me through a note from one of the children (in the picture). Translated loosely: Thank you for visiting us. We will wait for you to come back soon. We had a great time with you. It was an honour to have you with us.

Sarah Cansfield

The volunteering trip to Peru was an incredible and truly humbling experience. It was great to be able to learn more about the project that Aberdeen's Charitable Foundation is supporting and to see first-hand the positive impact that it is having on people's lives. Through educating children, parents and teachers, the project is improving the quality of children's lives and hopefully this foundation will also provide a better life for generations to come. It was also wonderful sharing all of the week's experiences with such an amazing group of colleagues, now friends, from all over the world. Thank you Aberdeen for this opportunity. I am very proud to work for a company that is giving back and making such a positive impact.

Flora Sexton

Working on arts with the kids in our primary school in Lima was a really lovely afternoon. With a little distraction working with paper and crayons and markers, everyone felt more relaxed and had something to do rather than just focusing on trying to communicate. The pictures we were working from for origami gave us the opportunity to exchange English, Spanish and Quecha vocabulary for animals and colours, without making the children feel as though they were performing or in an academic atmosphere. They had the opportunity to teach us something too (language or origami or how to draw something). It was a relaxed but really interesting atmosphere for a couple of hours and I felt we got to connect with the local kids and play with them without it being a teacher/student language drill. They were quick to learn and receptive, and I felt we got as much out of that time in a unstructured learning capacity as we did in any formal classroom work. I would wholeheartedly advocate for anyone to participate in a volunteering trip. Meeting people- children and adults- from a totally different background and society and establishing communication and a good atmosphere despite language limitations creates a warmth and brings personal skills to the fore we may never believe we have. It behoves us to experience this.



Andrew Neil

Getting the chance to participate in the trip to Peru and volunteer with Child Hope is an experience that is hard to put into words but it is something that is easy to recommend to everyone that they definitely need to do at some point and should put their name forward for future trips with the Foundation. On our first day arriving at the school I was very nervous standing outside the big green gates, you could hear the children waiting for us just on the other side screaming with laughter and excitement. When the gates opened the children had formed a guard of honour for us to walk through into the open courtyard in the middle of the school, the younger children were waving hundreds of balloons and the older kids were waving from the upper balconies. I remember seeing how happy they were to have visitors and how much it meant to them to see people interested in their school it was something special to see and my nervousness turned into nothing but excitement and eagerness to start in the classrooms. One particular experience that stood out in the week was getting to meet the student council that had a representative from each year, they were the elected student that promoted the schools values of honesty, responsibility and treating each other fairly. They spoke to us about how they ensure their fellow classmates are treated equally and that any student can come to them with a problem. It was humbling to see how proud they were to represent their students, how positive they were in looking out for each other and especially how you could see how much the other students respected them. They were filling the school with hope and it was clear the teachers, parents and ourselves were also overwhelmed with hope and belief that the project was a great cause to continue and support. After all if a child is given a little hope it definitely spreads.

Additional highlights were playing a football match against the school with Sylva scoring the best own goal I've ever seen, surviving our 'off road' bus trip every morning to the school, Shyra giving me eternal nightmares about the Easter Bunny, explaining Tam O'Shanter to school children, having a piscopolitan cocktail, trying to ignite a girls dress on fire as part of a national dance, Yuki teaching me Yoga in the Andes, the infamous Mama Africa night and of course getting to hang out with the best bunch of people and making great friends along the way.

Claire Drummond

What a trip and an amazing experience!! I thoroughly enjoyed meeting everyone and making great contact with a fun group of colleagues. The greeting we received at the school was overwhelming – balloons, cheers and clapping was however accompanied with stares and anticipation. The school was so welcoming and while educational opportunities don't present themselves every day to the teachers and pupils, they took the opportunity of interacting with us to enhance their English and learn about our customs and traditions, with both hands. Trying to enact a Scottish myth to 5 year olds was certainly an experience ... Haggis running round a mountain, playing golf and staying in a castle is not an easy charade! I very much enjoyed playing sport (football and volleyball) with them, although Peruvian customary sports day is certainly not your typical-Scottish sports day.

CESIP / Childhope is working alongside the school to make it a safer place for children to learn and also be able to speak out when they are upset, or unhappy. This is clearly evidenced by the newly formed DESNA group – a child's protection right group made up of an elected pupil from each year group. All so proud to be part of a group who are encouraging the values of school and ensure everyone is treated fairly both inside and outside of school. This was so great to see and I hope this continues to develop over the coming years in the school and be passed onto other schools.

As a group we enjoyed some culture and local foods.

As the Foundation hopes to continue to offer these trips, I would highly recommend them to all.

Manuele Ambrosini

The first moment at the school, where we came in under the tunnel balloon built from the kids, hear all that sounds of happiness due to our arrival, this is one the moment in my life which I will never forget.



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