

## Peru Achievements

This was **Quest4Change's** first project and we have been working in **Villa Maria, Peru** for 15years. Our projects help the children of this, one of the world's largest shanty towns, escape and avoid the prevalent drugs culture

### **Achievement Overview of past 15years**

(Updated September 2011):

- **492** volunteers have worked and played with several thousand disadvantaged children over 15years, donating more than **£243,338** directly to the project
- Constructed a pre-school for 100 kids which has annual maintenance and is coated in bright educational murals
- Purchased a pre and primary school where over 50 of the poorest children are sponsored to receive free education, with another 50 receiving subsidised places.
- Renovated 3 kindergartens
- Sponsorship of 20 local sports teams
- Construction of an assault course/play ground for local kids which is maintained and repainted annually
- Financed expansion of primary school to double its intake
- Paid for well over 100,000 swimming pool entrances
- Produced over 200 “Domingos Familiares”, free stage shows for the community
- Purchased around 30 life size puppets
- Purchased sound equipment for stage shows
- Restoration and fencing of a local playground
- Provided permanent employment for project co-ordinator
- Provided regular employment for 5 local project support staff
- Constructed 25 houses for some of the poorest families in the community

## **Achievements by year:**

### **1996**

**Number of Volunteers: 8**

Children's project begins in Peru – working at CEDRO orphanages

### **1997**

**Number of Volunteers: 15**

Second Quest Expedition with donations to CEDRO now reaching £7,500

Quest begins to support staff and projects year round

Development of workshops covering sports, crafts and other transferable skills

Family Sundays and Saturday Fetes co-ordinated, these continue and develop for years to come, aiming to strengthen community bonds

### **1998**

**Number of Volunteers: 30**

Fiftieth volunteer joins Quest and total charitable donations approach £17,000

General ongoing support through sponsorship of co ordinators, local sports teams and groups

Construction of childrens playground Music, movie and magic sessions developed for local community

Renovation of local kindergartens Founder of Quest Michael Amphlet meets Alejandro Menendez and creates 5 year plan

## **1999**

**Number of Volunteers: 29**

Quest funds resources for local community group Arco Iris who in turn agree to provide free workshops and entertainment for local children

Community cinema established in Villa Maria, Lima

Free Swimming Pool sessions offered to local children (over 100,000 entrances paid for as of 2007)

## **2000**

**Number of Volunteers: 30**

One hundredth volunteer attends Peru Childrens Project in the fifth year of support

Sports, handicrafts and arts activity programmes initiated (Peru Childrens Project)

£5000 of sports equipment donated (since project began) to needy groups and year round support provided (Peru Childrens Project)

## **2003**

**Number of Volunteers: 36**

Quest team opens preschool in Villa Maria (Peru Children's Project)

## **2005**

**Number of Volunteers: 37**

Peru Children's Project shortlisted for Responsible Travel Award

## **2006**

**Number of Volunteers: 33**

Other than working and swimming with kids the volunteers painted murals, built a very impressive addition to the play ground and made fools of themselves on stage, for the children's entertainment.

Quest celebrates 10 years of support for disadvantaged children in Peru (Peru Children's Project)

## **VM2**

Working in the park was very satisfying as the result of the team's work was immediate – the kids loved the constructions that were built for them.

## **2007**

**Number of Volunteers: 38**

Similar volunteer action this year, lots of playing with the children in Villa Maria. No construction.

### **Villa Maria 2**

The team re-painted the playground and installed a few more swings and see saws. Other than that, it was the normal 2 hour play followed by an hour in the pool every morning, and repeated in the afternoon. The team also painted the school, adding pictures with a 'Finding Nemo' theme, a plan of the planets and a map of the world. The team also did some informal teaching with the children, on geography, 'where are we from?' which went down well, apart from the general consensus that the Uk must be in South America somewhere.

### **Summer**

The building project was new and not what the team were expecting (they were expecting to be much more hands on with the kids). This made motivating them a bit more difficult at first, but they all enjoyed it and all said how worthwhile they found it - particularly as they could see the physical result of all their hard work at the end. It was a good opportunity to see the poor conditions the families were living in, and the families were very grateful. Two of the volunteers tried to run piano classes for the kids but these started very late and they found that lack of Spanish made it difficult.

The Domingos Familiares were enjoyed by all. They normally happen during the winter but having this group made it possible. Something to keep up - good fun and made a change from building. We also took the kids on an outing to the zoo - the first time they'd had a school trip - it was thoroughly enjoyed.

## **2008**

**Number of Volunteers: 26**

e teams of volunteers worked in Villa Maria, **Peru** where they spent **1000s of hours** with the children during their summer holidays, taking 100s of them swimming to cool off in the baking heat. As well as putting on numerous Sunday shows for the whole **community** to enjoy, 30 children were sponsored to go to the Quest-run pre-school. Here, a teacher from England was able to work at the school for 9 months, supported by the volunteers. Four **homes** were **built**, two of which were built by Trevor Langford who also run an incredible campaign to help save a local boys life. There are also now 4 permanent Peruvian Staff on the project, keeping the after school classes, activities and events for the whole community running all year round.

## **Gap Team 2**

Due to new government regulations this year children returned to school on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. This meant we only had one week of playing with the kids' full time. This didn't present too much of an issue as there had been fairly small numbers of kids showing up to the sessions, particularly in the mornings. After 3<sup>rd</sup> March we did construction work in the mornings and also helped out in the Quest School and continued to go to communities in the afternoons. For the construction project we worked in the Children's Park and repaired 3 sets of swings, 2 bridges and a set of monkey bars. We also built a tyre garden and a new tower and bridge to connect to the existing one. We also painted two murals at the top of the Quest School which can be seen from all over the hillside.

The construction work was slow to start and a lot of time was wasted. The 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend we stayed in VM in order to have an extra session with the kids on Saturday afternoon, we then went to Miraflores on Monday and Tuesday. Danilo said that while we were away he would organise the new timetable and sort everything out for us to start construction on the Wednesday, this wasn't done. The Wednesday morning was spent visiting the park and the school to see what needed to be done and what materials we needed, I expected this to already have been prepared. Thursday morning Alejandro went to buy materials so we didn't get started till late. Friday morning we discovered that unfortunately the tools had been stolen from the cabin in the park so another morning was wasted. Work in the park didn't really start till the following week.

Painting in the school went well and everyone was proud of the finished result. Some of the girls also loved helping out with the kids in the school.

## **Summer project**

Our main project was to build a new house for a family in need, one of the children living there (and who attends Quest Overseas school) kept on getting ill because of the cold and the damp in their old house. We successfully built them a big new house (comprising of 2 rooms). There was a bit of confusion at the start because Alejandro originally said we were going to aim to build 2 houses in the 3 weeks. However it turned out that the 1<sup>st</sup> house was a lot bigger when we went to measure it than Alejandro had

previously thought and as we were only a small group we did not have time to start another one. The group were a bit disappointed at first on learning this but once we compared it to the work that was done last year (2 small houses with a group of roughly 10 in 4 weeks) they realised that this was still a great achievement. The construction project was a great success and gives the volunteers a great sense of satisfaction at the end, being able to see a physical image of all their hard work, the stark difference of the old and new houses and the immense gratitude and almost disbelief on the family's faces. There is so much work that could be done, it just needs the funds.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> week we helped out in the school in the mornings. This involved greeting the kids in the morning, playing with them and keeping an eye on them until lessons started, assisting in Martha's large class of 3-year olds and waiting with them at the end of the morning until their families came to collect them. I felt this was a good experience for my group to get an opportunity to interact with the kids and experience 1<sup>st</sup> hand the running of the school that their donations help to maintain. However I would not recommend it for a group any bigger than mine. Acting as a teaching assistant works for Martha's class as the kids lose attention very quickly but in other classes I feel we would be a distraction. I felt it was the least useful work that we did and at times there were too many of us and not enough kids to look after and I felt our time could have been better used getting on with the house. On the last day of term the kids had a special food fete to celebrate the Peruvian National day. They were each assigned a region of Peru, dressed up in traditional dress (as did we) and brought along a dish of typical food from that region. Then we got to go around tasting each of the dishes - a great introduction for my group to Peruvian national food!

We fixed and extended an existing tyre swing in the children's play park in the complex, and added a second swing to the frame.

We did a lot of painting in the school itself. We gave a new (and much needed) lick of paint to a large swing, the outside gate and railings, the classrooms, corridors and computer room. We also painted a fun mural on the wall at the top of the stairs of an enchanted tree, which we all put our names on as a memento of our time spent there.

We also put on a Sunday show - a Domingo Familiar. This involved dressing up in the Walt Disney costumes, doing 2 dances (to Mary Poppins, Supercalifragilistic and to Under the Sea from the Little Mermaid), doing a magic act and a comedy mime sketch. It was a lot of work preparing for it all in the week leading up to the show (practicing and making costumes) but we had a really good turn out on the day. The girls loved doing the show; it was not at all what Tom expected to be doing on a construction project - I wouldn't say he enjoyed the show but he wanted to do it for the kids

**2009**

**Number of Volunteers: 14**

The volunteers of **Villa Maria** raised an incredible **£5,500** for Ana Mariela, a young Peruvian girl with a **life threatening tumor**. They also **built five homes** and entertained 100s of children from this, the **largest shanty town** in South America during their summer holidays.

The group's principal work was putting on activities for the kids; during the week they did two 3-hour sessions a day (including 1 hour at the pool), then at the weekend they had the Saturday morning fair and the Family Sunday. These activities and the schedule all work well and continue to be beneficial and enjoyed by the kids. Because the project has been running for so long, it is nice to add in some different activities, however it can take a lot of organisation on the part of the students. Pushing them to put the effort in though is really worthwhile. My group put on a school-style sports day on their last Saturday afternoon which proved to be a great success, thoroughly enjoyed by the students and kids alike. In fact it became one of their highlights of Villa Maria. It can be hard to get the students to take control of the activities sometimes, so I made it up to the daily leaders to be responsible for directing the sessions, so that they make the most of them. We also tried going to a couple of different communities, with differing levels of success. Taking a small group of them to the community where Pinto works was successful (but it needs to be well coordinated with Pinto) and very enjoyable for the students (the sessions are a lot calmer and the kids easier to control).

The group's 2<sup>nd</sup> focus was construction of houses. For the last 2 weeks of the project they did construction work in the morning and the normal activities with kids in the afternoons. The group really enjoyed contributing towards the Quest project 'My New House' and managed to build and install 5 houses in total. The students were at first unsure about the construction work. However the majority really enjoyed it in the end (despite the unforgiving sun) and were glad they had the chance to contribute. I personally find the construction work the most rewarding, having a physical product to show at the end of it all is very satisfying. I also feel it shows the students a side of Villa Maria that they might not otherwise experience. They get to see up-close the reality of the homes that these kids live in, the lack of space and personal belongings. As more and more houses have been built, the time it takes to finish a house seems to be decreasing as the Peruvians figure out the best methods and invest in better tools.

The group also decided to take it upon themselves to raise money for Ana Mariela so that she can have a number of much-needed operations on a tumor. It was a great success. By setting up a justgiving page, facebook group and through word of mouth to friends and family they managed to exceed their target in record time. The group were ecstatic that they were able to make such a difference to this little girl's life. Alejandro

suggested that this kind of fundraising could become a new Quest project in Villa Maria, one of social help, as there are so many needy cases within the community. I feel, however, that a lot of care needs to be taken, especially with medical cases so as not to risk breeding resentment and criticism over which cases were chosen to support. It is also something that can really only be done once with each group. The 1<sup>st</sup> plea for help appeals to the vast majority of people, especially being presented with a specific case to help 1 specific kid. However, if you start to ask the same people again about a different case, then they start to feel like they're being bled dry. After the success of raising money for Ana Mariela, we were approached by a mother needing money for her son's hospital treatment. The group decided not to help as they felt uncomfortable asking their friends and family for yet another donation.

Alejandro did suggest that the group do some evening session of activities with the kids. This was a good idea, but it never happened in practice as they were always already busy in the evenings with preparing dinner and rehearsals for Sunday's performance. I think it would be good to implement this work with the next group, however, perhaps only on a couple of nights a week, and on a Rota basis (a few members of the group each time) so that it doesn't tire them out too much.

The group's time in Villa Maria only coincided with only 2 weeks of school holidays. On the plus side this gave them the opportunity to dedicate these mornings to construction work, which they were please do be doing. Activities with the kids continued in the afternoons, but the kids' turn out decreased significantly, causing many of the students to ask why the dates weren't adjusted to coincide more with the school holidays.

As always in Villa Maria, there is plenty of work for the students to get on with

## **2010**

### **Number of Volunteers: 23**

The main focus of work was the normal games and activities up at the communities, followed by the pool. In fact this was done every afternoon, as the weather was not so hot, minimal time was spent in the communities. Saturday fairs, family Sundays and cinema evenings in the local next door (this was a huge hit, we had it running every night at one point). It was a shame that our time there only overlapped with the school holidays by 1 week as you never get as many kids turning up for the sessions once school is back on. It's a great set-up and is always successful but the degree of the success depends on how much effort the students put in to planning the activities, coming up with new ideas/games/special days. The more effort they put in, the more satisfaction they get out of it and the more exciting it is for the kids. I had big plans to get the daily leaders planning new activities/events in advance, to get them to regularly do more than the basic football, hula hoops and bracelet making up to a community.

The group love this idea but it does take a huge amount of nagging to get them off their backs motivated and actually do the prep needed!! Unfortunately this year I did not have the time to do as much of this, as I was kept busy with other issues. They did however put on a very successful Sat afternoon sports day.

As the group were there mainly during school time, most mornings at least 2 thirds of the group would help out at the local schools - in the Quest school, the Buenos Aires school and Cristian Bernard. This part of the project was a bit disorganised and at times I don't think it was the best use of their time. Overall the students felt it was worthwhile but that it needed more organisation. It is difficult to get them to help out in a way that is more than just a surplus teacher's assistant and also being careful to not disturb the children's normal education/timetable for such a short time. In the end the students would tend to take over the class for an hour and lead an hour's activity of arts and crafts - bringing all the materials with them. However it meant that they had a lot of spare time in the mornings and I think that this made them lazy, complaining that they were too tired etc when we got them to work more hours a day. Their favourite school to work in was Cristian Bernard, as the kids are older they felt they managed to make more of an impact. They also would have liked to have done more actual teaching - e.g. English, music, friendship bracelet making. I personally did not feel that this was the best use of their time in Villa Maria, it was a great experience for them to get involved in the Peruvian school world but perhaps 1 day a week would be sufficient and less disruption for the schools.

The final aspect of work we did was construction. The majority was not construction itself but the painting of houses built with funds from the Katie Ashbrige foundation, in preparation for her parents' visit to Villa Maria. The group all enjoyed this activity. We only built 1 house (a room for Ana Mariela) in the end but the group were unanimous that they loved it and would have liked to do more construction. They felt it was the most beneficial work that they did and had thought that they would get to do more building.

## **Summer**

**Construction** - the focus of this group was construction and the boys have improved the system to the point that it takes no time at all. The materials were there when needed and the group caught on pretty quickly as to what needed to be done. The amount of houses that were finished and the reactions from the families were certainly the highlight for the group. By assigning responsibilities in the morning, the group felt more confident in what they each needed to be doing. They also set time goals, like 2 houses in 1 day, and even if the goal wasn't reached the group seemed to work harder to achieve it and more was accomplished.

There were a lot of questions from the group as to how the families are selected, and I agree that this should be explained in detail to the groups as even I am not sure how it

works. It seems that every day a new family comes to ask for a house and it seems valid enough that the group should know exactly how one qualifies for a house. As well as this year it seemed that a few of the families chosen had larger support networks and even men at home. So the question remained in the group, "why do these people get homes?"

**Communities/Children** - Although the children were on holidays, there were not that many children out due to the cold weather, but when the group went into the communities, they were very well received as usual by all the children. The majority of the group members also really enjoyed having the chance to spend time getting to know the kids, and would have liked more opportunities to spend time with them, while others needed a little more encouragement. The group also got to know a lot of the parents of the children who lived around the school by going to play football with the *senoras de ampliacion casuarinas*; which I think helped in keeping strong links with the locals.

**Saturday Fair**- The fairs were held outside the school for this group which meant they were slightly smaller, but children from other communities did still come. They were successful, with the group coming up with a few new ideas which went down well. For the last fair we held in it Buenos Aires Casuarinas, as one of the neighbours from Juan Velasco sadly passed away, however the children had not been told it would be there and the turn out wasn't as great as normal, but it still went down well.

**Domingos familiares** - Again due to new management in the complex we were not able to hold the shows there, so *domingos familiares* were held in the locale next to the school. The group were slightly disappointed that they didn't get the chance to dress up in the *muneca* outfits but apart from that they went really well, with *luchos* help and dance routines. The whole group were really impressed with his dancing and enjoyed learning. It was also nice to see more children who attend the school come to see the shows as it was closer than the complex, and the younger ones could come without their parents having to bring them.

## **2011**

**Number of Volunteers:** 22

## **Winter**

After several weeks of brushing up on their Spanish, the team got stuck in at Villa Maria, with days divided between the construction of new houses for the families in the community who needed them most and entertaining the many children who inhabit the

favela. By the end of their trip, the volunteers had constructed four new houses for local families.

The construction was a tough task, and the Quest volunteers had to take charge of planning and building the panels for the houses, dismantling the previous house, clearing the site, putting up the new house and painting it. To complicate matters, most of the construction had to happen in a day, as the inhabitants had nowhere to go overnight. This side of the work was physically demanding - sawing and nailing planks all day in the burning sun and then carrying them up the steep stairs of the favelas. It was also the most visually rewarding however, and the team were rewarded with their effort, particularly when they could see their creations standing tall on the hillside.

The work with the local children was equally rewarding but for different reasons, and the team found it quite a culture shock to be the ones to stand out in a crowd!

Each afternoon consisted of gather together an assortment of balls, sticks and games and go to play with the children on one of the many dusty pitches spread around Villa Maria, followed by a cool off swim.

The usual feria's and Sunday shows were a hit, with entertainment, games and a magic show.

## **Summer**

The Villa Maria Summer Team continued the construction focus, building simple new homes for single parent families, which replaced existing unsafe and unsanitary dwellings. In four action packed weeks they constructed five new houses, the last of which was completed in just one day!

The team worked closely with the children in the surrounding communities, organising games, activities, dancing and entertainment for the crowd at the infamous Villa Maria Domingo Familiares (Family Sunday shows). This year, the team eagerly joined the children's school parade, dressing up in the national Peruvian colours! They also assisted at the Quest Overseas school, painting and playing with the children. A particular highlight this year came from volunteer Callum's enthusiastic drumming lessons, which the children loved. In the shanty towns of Villa Maria, where living in poverty has become a way of life for so many, there are large numbers of children living with impairments and disabilities. Life for these children is extremely difficult as they face physical barriers and stigma with little or no support. With this in mind, the summer trip was particularly inspiring for the children of Villa Maria, as drummer Callum, showed that having a visual impairment does not have to hold you back in life.

