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## Peru

Peru- a country rife with discrepancies and gorgeous variety. In fact, the landscape itself is immensely diverse, ranging from the frigid majestic mountain peaks of the Andes to the vast expanses of humid, sweltering Amazonian rainforests with gorgeous fauna. Enormous deserts, and dozens of beautiful glittering rivers and lakes, many of which lie in the rainforests dominate the landscape. The population is also very varied, including the indigenous people descended from the Incas, the white Spanish-speaking people descended from the Spanish aristocracy, not to mention the Japanese, African, and many other cultures and races that live in Peru. However, the most vital discrepancies involving the population of Peru are those related to the distribution of wealth. 52% of the population lives on under \$58 dollars a month, and 19% of the population exists in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$32 a month, whereas the richest 10% of the population earns 50% of the nation's income. (U.S. Department of State 7) Wealth and economic activity are overly concentrated in cities like Trujillo, Lima, and other major cities, while rural farm families in jungle and Andean areas are currently suffering in poverty, with many farmers turning to subsistence farming. Facilities such as schools and health clinics are more common in cities and rare in the virtually inaccessible small mountain villages in the Andes and the villages in the dense Amazonian jungle. Also, since these facilities are rare in the villages in these remote areas of the Andes and the rainforest, children or often required to commute to a school that is far away from their home, whereas in the cities, a school is not something that needs to be commuted to because of the school's frequency in the city. The mountains and rainforests, which are nearly inaccessible to outsiders are the homes of the farms of the subsistence farmers, the poorest people in Peru. Peru's diversity, although it is what makes it different and beautiful, also harms the people of Peru.

### Subsistence Farming Family

Since Peru's landscape is so varied, each new location has different needs and a different definition of what is "typical." However, subsistence-farming families normally consist of a couple, and several children born of that couple (the number can vary anywhere from one to fourteen). It is also perfectly feasible and in fact normal for there to also live an in-law of the couple with the family. (Coomes, Grimard, Diaz 2-3) The typical diet of the family also varies, but where the majority of subsistence farms are located, in the Andes mountain range, the staple food consumed is the hardy potato. Subsistence farmers usually consume the potato simply boiled, or with some aji, a chili used specifically in the Andes. ("Peru") A subsistence farmer's education is usually poor, as small towns in the Andes are usually difficult to reach, and students are required to commute to however far away the nearest school happens to be. Education is free and compulsory from the ages of 6-12, and secondary schooling is free and optional, though many subsistence farmers have not the luxury of allowing their children to attend, and also secondary school facilities are an infrequent circumstance in the Andes and Amazonian rainforests. ("Peru")

Typically, a subsistence farm consists of 3-5 hectares, which farmers use to produce different crops, depending on their elevation. At or above 8,000 feet, corn, beans, quinoa, and potatoes are cultivated. The lower levels, however, typically produce rice, corn and coca. As with the crops, the agricultural practices themselves at the different altitudes. People live in

environmentally fragile environments, where the agricultural practices that have been passed down for generations are beginning to wreak havoc upon the very land where their ancestors once farmed, with the current subsistence farmers struggling to produce enough crops to even survive.

In the high Andean mountain fields, where most subsistence farms are located, subsistence farmers use agricultural techniques developed hundreds of years ago by the Incas. In fact most of the equipment the modern subsistence farmers' uses are virtually identical to those used by the Incas. ("Peru" 5) In the dense rainforest, it is a similar story. Farmers rely upon "swidden fallow agriculture," a practice in which a farmer slashes and burns a patch of rainforest, as the indigenous people in that area have done for centuries. (Coomes, Grimard, Diaz, 3) However, in both of these cases, subsistence farming is not enough, and households must also rely on other sources for an income.

#### Barriers: Marketing, Population, and Education

Marketing of these crops is one of the problems that cause this outsourcing of labor, as, in both of jungle and mountain farms, there is very little access to market. In the Amazonian subsistence villages, roads are few and far in between, thus many have to rely on rivers as the only means of transporting their crops to market. In the Andes, there are also very few roads, and many villages are virtually inaccessible. Because of this, many farmers have little or no access to markets, and thus rely upon trading with their neighbors.

Marketing is but one barrier to food and nutrition security. In addition to this, many subsistence farmers are suffering under the delusion that conceiving more children will provide additional labor on the farm, thus making life easier. This is definitely false, as a recent study from McGill University proves. This study states that increased number of children consume more than they actually produce, sinking the family even deeper into poverty. Also, because traditional birth control practices are used instead of modern contraceptives, there is no effective way of controlling births. In addition to this, agricultural practices, though they may have worked centuries ago, are now destroying the environment by slashing and burning the rainforests.

Education is the key to solving all of these problems. After all, is it not the lack of knowledge that keeps farmers using out-of-date techniques, thus harming themselves? Lack of education in Peru is also causing deforestation of the rainforests, due to the ignorance of the farmers of the destruction they are wreaking on upon the environment. Lack of education, however, does not merely cause environmental; it also helps perpetuate sexism. In the Andes, for example, women in many communities are not allowed to express their opinion in town meetings because they are uneducated. However, most of the women are told that they cannot receive an education because they do not attend town meetings, and thus have no use for it. This is an ongoing, vicious cycle that must be stopped using education.

Education in Peru is a very severe matter. Despite recent progress, there are too few school facilities to accommodate the demands of the public. In the areas where there are facilities, the quality is extremely poor. This is for two reasons. The first is that despite the extremely poor quality of service, most parents are happy with their children's schools, believing in progress in terms of physical things such as there being more schools now than there was ten years ago in Peru. The second reason is there is widespread corruption throughout Peru's educational system. There are commonplace examples of jobs being received through means that are not those traditional. For instance, one "teacher" recently interviewed in Peru was actually a housemaid with political connections. (World Bank 209) Corruption, in World Bank's Country survey, was

mentioned in every single interview, without the interviewers' having to bring up the topic. Due to these educational conditions, only 80% of the daily-recommended intake required to be healthy is met, and one in five children in Peru are malnourished. Also, due to the poor quality of education, the rainforests are being put through the "slash and burn" agricultural practice at a faster pace than they can handle, causing major deforestation of the rainforests of Peru.

This education in Peru is not varying, and will remain the same until something is done to remove the blindfold over the public's eyes. The public, as previously mentioned, are content with their schools, thinking that the physical signs such as more facilities or government programs constitute improvement. They do not realize that these are worthless on the whole since the quality of the education is so poor. Improving this factor would directly impact and benefit subsistence farmers, as after all, knowledge is power. With the proper knowledge, farmers could improve the output of their crops, stop practices harmful to the environment, and in general improve the lives of subsistence farmers for the better.

### Trade Schools

After studying the conditions of Peru, I have come to the conclusion that the best course of action the country and any willing beneficiaries can take is the establishment of trade schools for children. School is obligatory for children from the ages of 6-12, but after this, since their current education does not benefit the farm or the family, the children are taken out of school to work on the farm. This is especially true for older siblings, as the younger children are creating more mouths to feed without relieving any of the farms pressure to grow crops. (Carranza) The trade schools could train children in new agricultural techniques, and other skills directly needed to improve Peru's subsistence farmers' livelihood. The classes would be rather like our American colleges, where the child or the parents would decide on one major theme for all of that child's schooling. For example, if it were the oldest boy in the family, the parents would probably choose to make that boy's major "agriculture." Then, all of the boy's classes, throughout his schooling would have something to do with agriculture, whether it would be reading about new agricultural techniques in reading class, or calculating the percentage of crops estimated to be produced that year in math.

Reading, writing, and mathematics would be taught in the first child's year of schooling, no matter what major theme parents choose for their children to take. Thus, trade schools in their courses could teach children new agricultural techniques, marketing, business management, biology, technology use, and various other skills that are needed to directly benefit the farm. Then, since the children's schooling will be improving the farms produce and profit directly, the parents will likely keep the child in school for longer. And, as most of the pressure is put on elder children to work and continue the farm, younger children would be free to pursue higher education, which, since in Peru, higher education fees are waived entirely for those who cannot pay, would produce a new generation of architects, doctors, teachers, and engineers, who would, due to their higher pay, benefit both the economy of Peru and their family on the subsistence farm.

The trade schools would be set up in a grid-like pattern, with a formula like one school for every thirty miles or as needed depending upon the dependability and stability of the roads and various other means of transportation. The trade schools would have several specialized teachers that taught the agricultural techniques that were specifically needed in the area of Peru

that they are in. Those teachers would be rather nomadic, going from school to school in their allotted area, according to the need of the people in that location. However, most of the teachers at a trade school would be well rounded and stationary, teaching as many classes as needed, teaching classes such as business management, reading, math, and marketing, which can be rather generalized. Teacher training would include mandatory updates and inservices.

### Courses of Action

Implementing trade schools, however, would be difficult. The difficulties would lie in two main areas: the expense of the building of the schools, and the cost of the technology that would be needed to teach the children how to skills. Certainly, the expense would be great; however, subsistence farmers have lived in poverty for decades, and their country, not to mention the world, has a responsibility to them to help them in their struggle against their conditions. Also, if organizations such as the World Bank or the United Nations could financially help Peru, this cost would be greatly reduced.

The second most difficult part of implementing this plan of action would probably be the locating and training of teachers with the skill and aptitude to teach these children the biology, reading, agricultural techniques and management skills as well as the other skills that would be utilized in a trade school. The United States of America could help by requiring land-grant college students majoring in agricultural areas to intern in Peru. Also, the Peruvian government could implement incentives for the teachers and eliminate the corruption from its education. Nongovernmental organizations could oversee this to see that it is done. If the Peruvian government could begin to implement incentives such as creating housing and food programs for those attending the classes required to become a teacher, thus assuring those students free housing and food throughout their college education if they became a teacher, it would in turn increase the amount of students going into the educational field. Then, the government or other beneficiaries must make the educational field a competitive one by giving out awards with prizes such as financial bonuses to the teachers who can show the best results in their schools. This would improve the quality of education, because if many people are vying for one position, the most qualified would receive it, and if this were the case throughout Peru, the quality of the education would be good.

Last, to make certain that the person who is the most qualified receives the position, officials must be closely watched by the public. To fight the corruption that has taken over the education in Peru the public must closely scrutinize any action taken. To make it possible for the public to be able to analyze any decision made by an official, the government or other organizations must make public any decisions or courses of action made by an official. Simply by implementing these three actions, trade schools could become a plausible course of action, and by implementing trade schools, subsistence farmers lives could be greatly improved.

The nation of Peru has come far from it once was. Peru has one of the best economies in South America, and yet improvement is still needed. A whopping fifty two percent of the population lives in poverty, and 6.5 million people, 19% of the population of Peru, still suffer in extreme poverty, the majority of the 52% and the 19% of the population living in poverty trying to scratch out a meager livelihood from their subsistence farms in such remote areas as the Andean mountain ranges and the Amazonian jungle. One in five of their children are malnourished, and the children who are healthy must work hard to support their family, by outsourcing themselves to other farms and factories when not required to work the farm, just so their family will not starve. The world has the resources and the technology to help these people,

and yet their lives have been unchanged for many years, still utilizing ancient agricultural practices began by their ancestors. However, by establishing trade schools in Peru and by utilizing the methods expressed in this essay, the world can give these people a better, less precarious life. Trade schools could improve the output of yearly crop harvests, by teaching Peruvians better farming techniques and about the hazards of plant disease and insects, along with how to prevent them. Trade schools could give millions of people the chance at a better life, a chance that any human being rightfully deserves. It could produce an outpouring of new doctors, new scientists, new lawyers, and new writers, all of whom who would help propel Peru into the future, by improving the economy, and lowering the poverty rate immensely.

In time, if this solution works for Peru, other third world countries could begin similar programs, and improve the global economy and society. However, trade schools, as any good and sustainable solution, is not something that can be implemented in a day or over night; it will take years, perhaps decades for this to become a reality and also the expense of this program will be great. However, any cost would be balanced by the growth in the economy and the enhanced lives of the subsistence farmers. The hard work needed to make trade schools a reality would also be balanced by the knowledge that we are doing right by these subsistence farmers by giving them what they need and deserve after living so long in poverty and squalor. If the worlds organizations can work together to help implement trade schools in Peru, generations of Peruvians, and perhaps in future years, even other third world countries such as those in Africa and the Middle East would benefit from our toil, helping to make our world a better, brighter place for us all. After all, as a familiar Peruvian proverb goes, “Little by little, we walk far.”

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