

## **Description of Project:**

Organization information: Founded in 1999, Expand Peru is a registered nonprofit organization that helps Peruvian children in extreme poverty through programs that focus on education, health, and economic development. Expand Peru does not receive funding from the government or from any public, national or international programs, so financial access has been limited. It is also not affiliated with any religious, political or commercial organizations. Expand Peru works to place international volunteers with host families and institutions, such as schools and orphanages, that work at the grassroots level. The organization has seven operational programs at the moment: CASA (Centers of Assistance that look after elementary school students while their parents work), Casa de Bebes (care centers for children aged six months to three years), Construyendo Vidas (program that provides free construction and building repair consultations to families), orphanage work, medical volunteers, rural school teaching, and care for children with special needs. Expand Peru is based in Huancayo, a rural region that is in the Mantaro Valley and the center of the Peruvian Andes. Although Peru has succeeded in reducing its poverty level to 28 percent according to a survey conducted by the International Monetary Fund, for the youth served by Expand Peru, day-to-day survival remains a struggle.

Project information: From the middle of June to the end of August, I will be volunteering with Expand Peru to implement a microgrant project and help out at the Casa de Bebes, a home that cares for children six months to three years of age while their parents search for work. One of the main problems with existing microfinance organizations is that they offer high-interest loans that can actually worsen indebtedness. My model is different in that the grants are a gift and will not put the Peruvians at risk. If the grantees are able to establish successful businesses, however, they will be encouraged to reinvest the amount of their microgrant in a community fund, so that microgrants can be distributed to others in the community to promote more widespread economic development.

The goal of this project is to help 15 to 20 rural teenage girls start their own craft microenterprise and develop leadership skills. Currently, I am in the process of writing an interactive curriculum in English and Spanish on business fundamentals (accounting, marketing, personal finance, social responsibility, etc.), which I will teach Monday through Friday for around one hour each day. To create an age-appropriate curriculum, I am building upon the Knowledge@Wharton High School online resources, *Entrepreneurship: Owning Your Future*, the official textbook of the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), and my own textbooks from business courses I have taken.

During the summer, I will get to know the girls on a personal level and build English conversation skills through informal games, leadership activities, and discussion fora on pertinent social issues (e.g. human rights, the media, careers, body image, etc.). In our spare time, we may go on cultural excursions and engage in community service projects. After speaking with people who have worked in Latin America, I have decided to hire local artisans during my first week in Peru to provide craft lessons to the girls. When I

meet the girls, I will conduct a brief assessment of their abilities and interests in order to identify potential crafts and trades that they might like to explore (e.g. jewelry making, weaving, etc.).

By giving underemployed teenagers transferable art and business skills, I hope to provide healing and hope in addition to regional economic growth and improved financial literacy. Eventually, I hope these girls will transmit their expertise to younger girls in their school and community and invest any money raised through the cooperatives in higher education or vocational training. After returning to the United States, I will stay in contact with the girls and the Expand Peru staff through email. My aspiration is that Expand Peru and the Omprakash Foundation will promote this program as a new volunteer opportunity under their umbrella. Many of the lesson plans that I create will be made available through Omprakash to nearly 7000 volunteers working at grassroots organizations in over 30 different countries. My dream is to connect Expand Peru with a student group, such as Penn Microfinance or Penn International Business Volunteers, that organizes annual social impact consulting trips to developing countries, so that student volunteers can help this initiative reach more NGOs and markets. Following my time in Peru, I will stay actively involved with Expand Peru by giving community presentations, engaging in media outreach, and organizing fundraisers.

I am currently exploring both Peruvian and North American markets through which the girls can sell their products. I have contacted the Latin America Travel Association Foundation, and they may be interested in connecting Expand Peru with local hotels, travel agencies, and stores that would stock the goods locally. I have also established a partnership with N'SESA International. N'SESA International is a group of high school chapters that purchases handmade goods from nonprofit organizations and sells the products in U.S. markets (e.g. at school fundraisers) to benefit youth in the developing country.