

The only opportunity: Human security for the development of women and children in Peru



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Peru

Duration: January 2007 to September 2010

Implementing UN Agencies: UNFPA; UNICEF; WHO/PAHO

Other Implementing Partners: Regional governments of Apurímac and Ayacucho; local governments; regional health authorities; regional education authorities; NGOs

Budget: \$2,062,343.61

Key Words: Reproductive health; health delivery; education; women; children

BACKGROUND

Poverty in Peru is highly concentrated in the Andean region where close to half of the population lives in extreme poverty particularly in the departments of Apurímac and Ayacucho. The disproportionate impact of poverty on children and women can be evidenced by high rates of infant mortality and chronic malnutrition as well as high rates of maternal mortality and illiteracy. Although access to basic services has

improved over the last decade, important cultural barriers have obstructed access to basic and reproductive health education, contributing to persistent vulnerability among children and women. Moreover, high levels of violence in the region have further diminished the human security of the most vulnerable people in the Andean region.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the project was to develop the capacity of children, adolescents and women living in Apurímac and Ayacucho in order to promote, defend and protect their human rights, and as a result expand their human security. More specifically, the project sought to reduce the rates of infant mortality, chronic malnutrition, maternal mortality, and adolescent and

unwanted pregnancies through improving basic and reproductive health education and services; early childhood development practices; and the mainstreaming of children's, adolescent's and women's rights into relevant programmes at the sub-national level.

BENEFICIARIES

The direct beneficiaries were roughly 23,000 women and 20,000 children and adolescents in primary and secondary school. The indirect beneficiaries included

other community members living in Apurímac and Ayacucho.



Credit: UNFPA



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NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The project employed innovative maternal care strategies, including maternal waiting houses and the adaptation of birth care practices to the cultural context of the region. With the support of municipal governments, waiting houses and other health establishments received up-to-date equipment as well as training for obstetric and neonatal care professionals. In addition, appropriate community outreach ensured that pregnant women utilized the facilities, assuring institutional deliveries for women living in distant areas. As a result, the project contributed to notable improvements in the quality of care provided to mothers in health establishments.

(ii) By the end of the project, educational materials had been produced in local languages and all school libraries had a minimum of 100 texts in both Quechua and Spanish. Utilizing these materials, teachers and principals received training on how to incorporate aspects of the local culture into primary education, particularly in the areas of reading comprehension and mathematical reasoning. By giving more relevance to the social and cultural contexts of children, the project significantly improved the quality of education in pre-schools and primary schools.

(iii) In order to respond effectively to the specific needs of adolescents, the project strengthened the capacity of health professionals and teachers to address reproductive health issues. In addition, six Youth Development Centres (YDCs) were established, which provided adolescents with counselling and preventive health services as well as the space to exchange ideas on their rights, development and citizenship. As a result, adolescents became more involved in community and municipal decision-making, including participatory budgeting of local government programmes.

(iv) In order to bolster the existing mechanisms for protecting the rights of women, children and adolescents, the project supported the establishment and the strengthening of 25 Municipal Defence Centres for Women, Children and Adolescents, 5 School Defence Centres for Children and Adolescents, and 3 Community Defence Centres. In coordination with each other, the defence centres became a primary community resource for the prevention of and response to gender and domestic violence.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the added value of a human security approach for strengthening State-society relations. Involving municipal authorities in the management and implementation of project activities based on the actual needs and vulnerabilities of the communities served to increase their legitimacy by illustrating their commitment to the betterment of local communities. With a renewed sense of trust and by receiving tangible benefits, community members became more engaged, particularly across previously

marginalized groups including women and adolescents. The strengthening of State-society relations provides a crucial platform for continuing efforts to address human insecurities in the future. The project also highlighted the critical importance of integrating strategies to improve health, basic and reproductive health education and the protection of rights in order to address the complex combination of poverty and violence in the region.