



KIDS AT THE CROSSROADS PERU

Where we work and why:

Kids at the Crossroads Peru (KATC) currently works only in Ayacucho, Peru. Ayacucho is an administrative department (region) of Peru as well as the name most commonly used to refer to the region's capital city. We work in both the city and rural areas in the region of Ayacucho. Kids at the Crossroads chose to work in Ayacucho because despite steady economic growth in other parts of Peru, Ayacucho remains one of the poorest regions in the country. According to 2011 data published by Peru's Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI) 56% of the population in the Ayacucho region lives in poverty, with more than 26% living in extreme poverty and more than 31% lacking one or more basic needs.

Ayacucho is also the region that suffered most from the armed internal conflict between the Maoist Shining Path and the Peruvian government during the 1980s and 1990s. Thousands of poor, indigenous people were caught in the crossfire between a bloody Shining Path insurgency and brutal government backlash. The final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimates that nearly 70,000 people died during the conflict that finally ended with capture of the Shining Path leader in 1992. More than 40% of those deaths occurred in the Ayacucho region. That conflict left deep social, economic and psychological scars throughout Ayacucho. Basic infrastructure throughout the region, including schools, clinics, roads, water systems, and power stations were destroyed and homes, farms and villages were virtually destroyed leaving people with nothing. Today, 20 years later, Ayacucho is still working to recover.

While the children and youth in the region today did not directly experience Peru's political violence during its peak in the 1980's and early 1990's, the trauma experienced by their parents can be passed on in many ways. According to a 2004 study by Kaethe Weingarten of the Harvard Medical School, inter-generational trauma from political violence can be transmitted through, among other ways, projecting fear, lack of communication, and humiliation. The parents of many of the children who participate in our programs were children during the period of violence. Many lost one or both of their own parents. They received little or no education during that violent time and now struggle to find adequate employment and are unable to help their own children with their education.

Furthermore, the U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime recently announced that Peru is now the world's largest producer of coca, the raw material for cocaine and many experts suspect that Peru is now also the world's largest exporter of this dangerous and illegal drug. Sadly, drug trafficking, particularly cocaine, is fueling an economic boom in Ayacucho. Studies indicate that cocaine production and trafficking accounts for approximately 12% of Ayacucho's regional gross domestic product, although many experts suggest that that figure is much higher. Our mission is to help children find and be prepared for legal and productive alternatives to the drug trade as they reach adulthood.