

Saving Children with Disabilities

Crafts and Rehabilitation Centers in Cusco, Peru

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Helping Children with Disabilities in Cusco, Peru

In Cusco, Peru, lack of social support, limited opportunities for Education, Employment and Participation in the Community isolate disabled children and their families, leading to increased levels of stress and hardship. They are also often targeted by abusers, who see them as easy victims.

Focus: (who we want to help)

Children in Cusco, Peru, with a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health disability, are frequently marginalized. In addition to economic struggle, disabled children find themselves at significantly increased risk because of stigma, negative traditional beliefs and ignorance.

Traditional families (most of the time illiterate and poor) consider a disabled member of the family as a curse or punishment for something they did wrong. Therefore, they are isolated and given a negative connotation, and some are even excluded from opportunities to learn to read, write, and in some cases to walk.

In America, the government wants disabled children to be a priority, both nationally and locally. However, in Peru it is a whole different reality. Currently in Cusco there are no support centers for further development of disabled children, especially when they get older and could potentially become successful members of the society. Almost all of the children with disabilities in Peru are denied to develop to their full potential.

Objectives: (What we want to do)

- Provide disabled citizens (ages 13 and up) with an occupation through the production of traditional Peruvian handicrafts organized in workshops. Workshops will take place four days a week. Our team will work with two groups of kids that will be given two different schedules. The first group will work on Monday and Wednesday, and the second group will work on Tuesday and Thursday. Each group will have fifteen kids to start with.
- Cusco is a top destination for travelers because of famous landmarks such as Machu Picchu, one of the wonders of the world. Interaction with local communities is a very popular choice for tourists that visit Cusco. We are planning to create an interaction

program between disabled children and foreign visitors. This experience will give the tourists the opportunity to know more about the Peruvian culture and also the chance to contribute to the kids' development.

- Tourists will spend an afternoon with the kids helping them to build a handcrafted project (Peruvian traditional handcrafts, jewelry, souvenirs) that later tourists can keep in exchange for a monetary contribution. The amount of money is voluntary. Approximately, forty percent of the money received from tourists will go to the project fund, and the remaining sixty percent will be given to the kids and their families. This way, the children will have an opportunity to generate income and shape their craftsmanship skills.
- In addition, the children's parents will be welcome to participate in these workshops. We will provide orientation and show them different ways to help their children.

Execution: (How we are going to do it)

Most importantly, we already have the confirmed support of a number of organizations in Cusco. Qosqo Maki is an institution that works with homeless children. They have created workshops for the children to build a variety of products that they sell in local shops, on fairs and festivals during the holidays. The organization has an international fund for its' above services. We will use Qosqo Maki's experience and knowledge to create the same line of workshops for disabled children. They have offered their support and their willingness to make our project permanent. Qosqo Maki presented to us the possibility to place a link on their webpage where visitors and sponsors can learn about the program and make donations. Additionally, Qosqo Maki works with experienced volunteers that offered their collaboration to help us take care of the children.

We have a place that is equipped for our project. This is a school that can provide us the classrooms after school hours. The school periodically offers basic education for disabled children. They are also willing to work with us to continue occupational education for the kids after regular school hours. We have decided to employ local experienced artisans and craftsmen to work with us teaching kids to produce traditional souvenirs and handcrafts.

Children will be provided with food and recreational activities, especially considering the fact that most of these kids are being forgotten at home. Due to low costs of living in Cusco, we will be able to provide transportation during all stages and activities of the project by renting a bus/van and by hiring a driver.

Travel agencies are willing to include our project as part of their optional activities for tourists. Agencies will include our project as an optional activity for foreign visitors that come to Cusco to experience co existential tourism. We are going to distribute brochures to tourists through travel agencies. In addition we will place the brochures in Tourist Information Centers.