

Los Martinctios, Villa El Salvador, Peru

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Peru

Peru is located along the western coast of South America and is home to nearly 30 million people. Peru's indigenous population is vast with 45% of the population identifying as Amerindian. Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara are all held as official languages.

The capitol city of Lima is home to 31% of the population and receives approximately 150,000 new migrants each year. Lima is considered the hub of political and economical activity.

Lima's economy is based on the export of minerals and other natural resources and while Peru is experiencing economic growth, wealth is not trickling down to the poor sectors and is creating growing disparity among the rich and the poor.

Villa El Salvador

Villa El Salvador is a district on the south end of the capital city of Lima. It was founded in 1971 as a shantytown when some 200 families organized a land invasion to address the need for more housing in Lima.

40+ years later VES has grown into one of the largest and most populous districts in Lima with nearly 380,000 residents.

The community has been internationally recognized for their organizing and development efforts and were even nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

Los Martincitos

Los Martincitos is a senior center located in VES serving 104 abuel@s three days a week. It is the only senior center focused on working with seniors living in extreme poverty and addressing basic needs on a weekly basis.

Services include:

- Two hot meals a day
- Literacy Programs
- Physical Therapy
- Skill-building Workshops
- Educational Events
- Home Visits

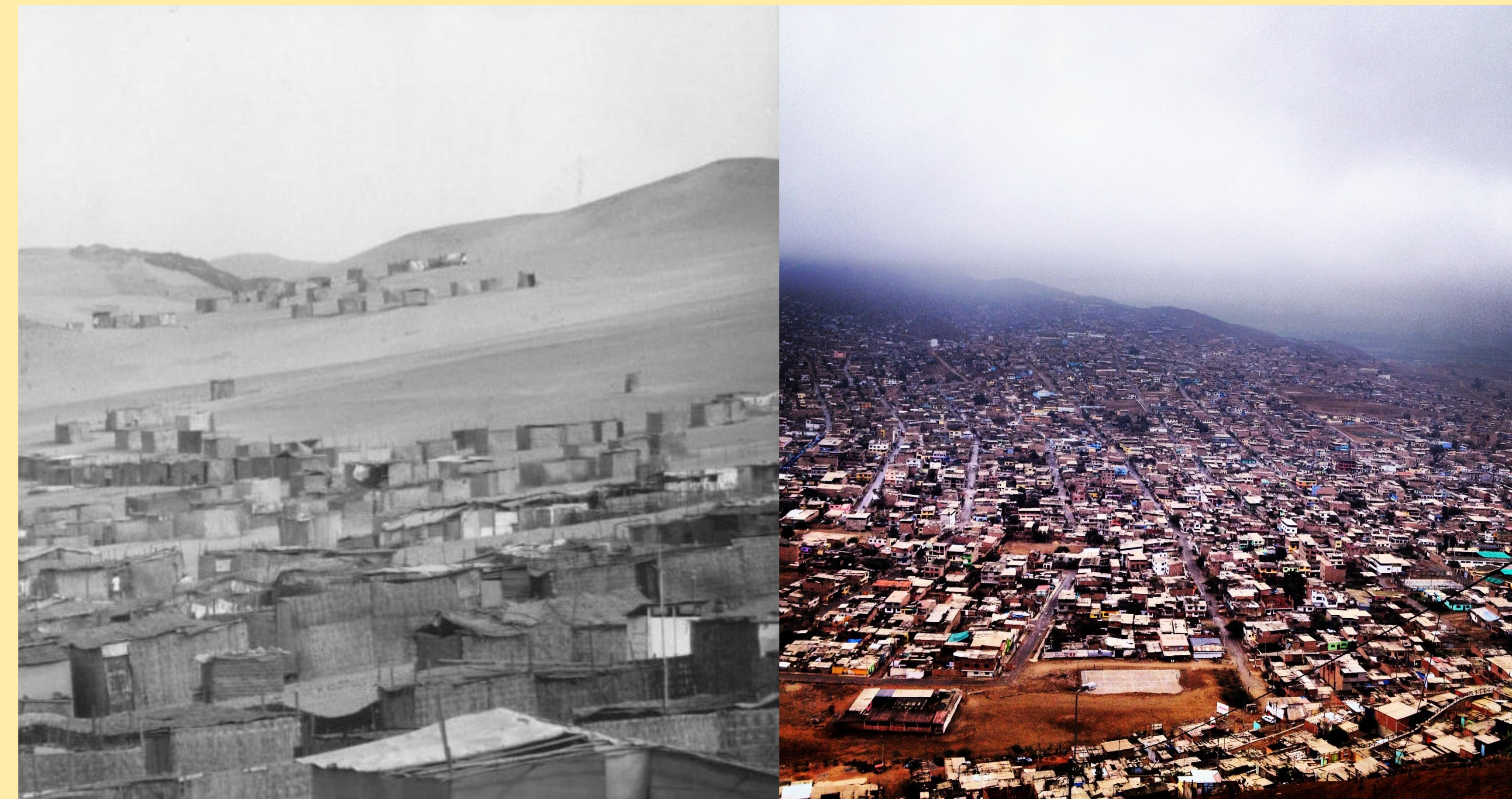


Project

My daily responsibilities varied during my time at Los Martincitos which allowed me to participate in the wide array of services they offer. This included anything from helping to prepare meals, assist in physical therapy, participate in needs assessment during home visitations, and providing eager ears to listen to stories and develop relationships.

I spent a lot of time researching and interviewing residents about the history of Villa El Salvador including the impact of the Shining Path on residents of VES.

I also researched national and local services available to older adults in Peru.



Outcomes

As a result of my research, interviews and interactions I developed several resources to be made available for future international volunteers to enhance experience at Los Martinctios and expand their understanding of the community.

These resources include:

- An Eco-Map of the organization within a global context
- An Informational guide on historical trauma within the VES community
- An informational guide on Peru's Pensión 65 program

Skills Developed

Skills developed through this experience include:

- Relationship building skills when entering a community as an outsider
- Empathic listening and strength based interviewing
- Navigating a multicultural, multilingual setting
- Integrating multiple research methods into a cohesive product



Connections

Classroom:

SW 701: International Social Work

This course helped me think critically about my role as a US trained social worker and what I brought with me because of that.

SW 697 Social Work Practice with Community and Social Systems

This course prepared me to think about different ways in which individuals engage with their communities which allowed me to identify various levels of social participation in VES.

Career:

My field placement at Los Martincitos reminded me of the power and importance of human connection and reminded me of why I went into social work in the first place.

Lessons Learned

- Respect is the foundation of any relationship building process
- Embrace every moment as an opportunity to learn and acknowledge that everyone has something to teach
- Language is extremely important, but when words fail there are many ways to communicate

Advice

- Seek out opportunities to develop relationships with local people. They can show you their community/country in ways you couldn't experience otherwise.
- When preparing for departure explore the country you are visiting through a variety of resources. Don't just 'read' up on the country, but listen to the music, look at art, watch movies, listen to the language. You'll get a better picture.

Acknowledgements

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Photo Credit: www.amigosdevilla.it