

# Light and Leadership Initiative

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## Huaycán, Perú

Huaycán is a developing community within the Lima region. The community of Huaycán was established in the 1980s after a series of terrorist attacks by the Shining Path. The government displaced a large number of survivors in an undeveloped, desert-like area of Lima that is now Huaycán (a name that means “Sliding Rocks,” as the city is built into a rocky, desert-like terrain that becomes dangerous for houses when it rains).

The members of this community are challenged by poverty, gang violence, and lack strong education.

## Huaywasi

Huaywasi is an artisan’s program benefiting several local women in Huaycán. The program promotes fair wages, ethical production, and education. The women in the artisan program make enough money from Huaywasi products to support their families and have been able to leave their other artisan jobs that pay sweatshop wages.

The products are absolutely beautiful and incredibly well made!

Website: [www.Huaywasi.com](http://www.Huaywasi.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/huaywasi](http://www.facebook.com/huaywasi)



## Placement/Project Information

### Light and Leadership Initiative

At the Light and Leadership Initiative, we worked within the youth program to provide a variety of classes for the children. Classes include English class, sports class, arts class, reading class, science class, math class, chess club, computer programming and more!

### Agency/Community Partner

Light and Leadership Initiative was founded by Lara DeVries in 2008 to serve the local community and provide educational opportunities. The Women’s Program offers computer, english, and spanish literacy classes, along with workshops in artisanship. Talented artisans are then invited to sell their products through LLI and earn far more than their previous jobs offered. Along with the women’s program, LLI offers a youth program to provide educational opportunities for the future of Huaycán.

## Outcomes

The outcomes of LLI include better education for all participants, access to books and computers, experience coding and learning new languages, formation of one’s identity as a leader in the community, and fair wages for artisan workers. As volunteers, we were able to learn about different PODS topics by observing and interacting with the community. By talking with local community members, we were also able to learn about the Peruvian government and how community members are advocating for issues, such as women’s rights.

## Skills Utilized/Developed

In our work with LLI, we were able to engage in learning from a diverse and different culture. It was important for us to learn from the women and children as informants of the culture, the most effective practices and their particular needs. We were also able to develop our skills in promoting social justice, particularly educational equity. By listening to and learning from the women and children, we were able to collaborate on different ways to seek justice. Finally, by observing Lara and her work, we were able to reflect on different forms of engagement and developing work and outcomes.

## Classroom Connections

We both took Diversity and Social Justice in Social Work (SW504) and Interpersonal Practice with Individuals, Families, and Small Groups (SW521). Those courses helped to prepare us on practicing cultural humility as well as developing active listening skills. The empathy and critical thinking skills we gained in those courses were useful tools in our work in Huaycán.

## Lessons Learned

**Sarah:** My time in Peru taught me the true importance of connecting with communities and building genuine relationships. The language barrier was difficult, but it forced us to find creative ways to connect and laugh together.

**Janae:** This experience taught me how important it is to find ways to motivate and empower community members when facilitating change. When participants are invested in something they love, it makes change so much easier.



## Career Connections

**Sarah:** Moving forward in my career, I will always be able to look back on the unique experience I had in Peru. I plan to work in the education system in the United States and I look forward to using the analytical skills I gained in Peru for my work here.

**Janae:** This experience has taught me the value of understanding grassroots movements, community empowerment programs, and diverse cultures. As an IP student, this knowledge will inform my practices and empathetic interactions with those in the communities I serve.

## Advice

**Sarah:** Keep an open mind and an optimistic outlook! Seeing the world will enrich your work tenfold.

**Janae:** Going outside of your comfort zone helps you grow as an individual, community member, and professional. Take advantage of as many opportunities as you are able!

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