

# 2 Months in Peru with Manos Unidas

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## Outcomes:

- I travelled to Peru with the intention of learning about special education in a setting outside of the U.S. I learned about the resources, the structure, and the general outlook on children with disabilities.
- Academic Product: collaborated with teachers and psychologist to create a social story about treating your classmates with kindness.



Left: The teacher reading the social story we created together to the preschool classroom.

## Skills Developed:

- On this trip I practiced and developed:
- Patience
  - Compassion
  - Cultural humility
  - Observational skills

## Lessons Learned:

I learned the value of listening. I understand Spanish better than I can speak it so I found myself just listening a lot. Because I'm not a native Spanish speaker it took me longer to comprehend and process what people were saying. This taught me to take in what people were saying and forced me to deeply reflect on it before responding or acting on it.



## Location: Cusco, Peru

- Cusco is located high in the Andes mountains, at about 11,000 ft in elevation (Ann Arbor sits at 600ft, for comparison).
- From 1400 to 1533, Cusco was the capital of the Incan Empire and today is still considered to be the heart of the Incan heritage. The Incan culture still plays a heavy role in the Cusquenian lifestyle and can be seen in the architecture, the food, the clothing, and the festivals.
- Cusco is the closest city to Machu Picchu, one of the 7 Wonders of the World. Therefore much of Cusco's economy is fueled by tourism.

## Local Agency: Manos Unidas International

- "Building inclusive societies for children with special needs in Latin America"
- Specific programs include:
  1. School for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
  2. Vocational training program for adolescents with disabilities
  3. Inclusion program (Students with Autism in general education settings)
  4. Café employing young adults with disabilities

## My Role: Observe, Learn, Volunteer

- Observed the school psychologist on variety of projects
- Learn about the local culture and experiences of families with children with disabilities in the Peruvian education system
- Volunteer to serve the students, teachers, families, and staff where they needed me

## Connections:

### Classroom Connections

SW 504: Diversity and Justice in Social Work

- This course introduced me to the concept of cultural humility, which was the most important practice throughout my trip. In this course, I learned how to practice cultural humility in my social work role in the U.S. however, this trip gave me the opportunity to put it in action outside of the U.S.

SW 612: Mental Health and Mental Disorders of Children and Youth

- This course prepared me to work with children with disabilities, particularly children with Autism. I was able to use the knowledge I acquired from this class and apply it when working with the students in Peru.

### Career Connections

- Spanish improvement: I can connect to a broader scope of people thanks to my immersive Spanish experience.
- Unique populations: I am comfortable working with a population that is very different than myself.

## Advice:

- If possible, stay with a host family for a completely immersive experience.
- It is possible to do an independent study without extra funding but budgeting is very important.



## Acknowledgements:

Thank you to the Office of Global Activities for funding my Global Independent Study, without which this incredible opportunity would not have been possible. Thank you to Odessa Gonzalez-Benson for being my faculty advisor and guiding me through this process seamlessly. And lastly, to Manos Unidas and my new Peruvian family.