

## Princeton in Latin America October Newsletter

### In the Field: Lara Lorenzetti, 2009-10 Pro Peru Fellow, Cusco

At 6:30 in the morning, the sun's light was just beginning to peek over the Andes and illuminate the Sacred Valley of the Incas. Just then, our health team, which consisted of two doctors, two dentists, an obstetrician, a biologist, three members of the ProPeru staff, and six volunteers, started the steep and winding ascent up to Marcuray. Like many of ProPeru's intervention villages, Marcuray is a small community tucked high within the Andes Mountains. Its remote location has enabled the community to maintain its authentic *alto andino* identity, but there are some clear disadvantages that come with such isolation, especially in terms of health care. In the event of a health emergency, the people of Marcuray must travel roughly two hours by foot or horse to the nearest clinic or hospital. This turns each emergency into a near death experience. Furthermore, since visiting a health center is an all day affair, many residents of Marcuray and similar villages will postpone seeking medical attention for fear of losing a day's work. In Peru, health centers run by the national *Ministerio de Salud* (MINSA) often attempt to visit the remote villages in their jurisdiction to run health campaigns and provide basic services on a monthly basis. However, the isolation of such villages often deters MINSA from visiting on a regular basis, if at all. For these reasons, ProPeru seeks out or is solicited by communities like Marcuray to have health campaigns, build better burning stoves, install ceramic water filters, and help the community progress in general.



Lara with schoolchildren

ProPeru Services Corps is a non-government organization that works on projects that aim to empower communities and offer sustainable development opportunities in Cusco and the Sacred Valley. Over the past four months, I have had the privilege of working on ProPeru's health portfolio at their Urubamba office. The health portfolio projects intend to provide a dynamic and comprehensive approach to community public health. Since most of our projects fall under the umbrella of the health portfolio either directly or indirectly, I have been able to work concurrently on a myriad of projects with the support of ProPeru staff, volunteers from abroad, and community partners. Having returned to the same communities to implement different aspects of our health portfolio, I can see the impact our efforts have made on the wellbeing of individuals, families, and the community at large.

One of my responsibilities has been to work on a study that tests the efficacy of our homemade ceramic water filters. By collecting feces samples both before

and after the distribution of our filters, we have been able to determine that they effectively eliminate waterborne parasites. Education is a crucial component of sustainable development, and I have spent many project days entering rural homes to inform families on topics ranging from environmental conservation to composting to the importance of maintaining a clean living space. Taking this educational component a step further, our volunteers have gone to both Spanish and Quechua speaking primary schools to educate children on health topics including hand washing, the spread of influenza, and general personal hygiene. As the assistant health coordinator, I have a hand in organizing and facilitating our many projects, especially our health campaigns, which have the most immediate and direct effect on community health.

After two hours of climbing, we finally reached Marcuray and the primary school that would serve as a make-shift clinic for the day's health campaign. Many women with their children, aware of ProPeru's free medical consultations and medications, were already waiting for us as we arrived. We immediately split into the different services (general medicine, obstetrics, dentistry, laboratory, pharmacy, and triage), and quickly turned the small school building into a functional health facility. In triage, I was the first point of contact for the patients, and they told me about their aches and pains as I took their weight and blood pressure. The patients would shyly laugh as I asked them for their name in Quechua, *¿Iman sutyki?*, and helped them find the appropriate service. In the afternoon, after the long line of patients in triage vanished and reappeared in the pharmacy, I helped fill prescriptions and explained how and when medication should be taken. Most children received albendazol to treat acute diarrheal disease due to parasitic infection, while adults were prescribed an assortment of medicines to treat lumbar pain, arthritis, and acute respiratory infections among other things. Finally, by early evening all the patients had been seen and the tired health team gathered around a large pot full of potatoes that was graciously offered by the community as a sign of gratitude. Marcuray's health promoter, the man who had sought out ProPeru's services for the sake of his community, then led us back down the mountain by an alternate route, passing through Inca ruins and under a gushing waterfall.



Triage Line in Marcuray



Lara above Urubamba



Siblings aided by the health project in Marcuray

## Report from Rosa Mendoza '09, PiLA Summer Intern in El Salvador with Libras de Amor

In early July, I traveled to El Salvador to work with Libras de Amor (Pounds of Love), a program that was created by a non-profit organization called FUSAL (The Salvadoran Foundation for Health and Development). Libras de Amor is a comprehensive nutritional program whose goal is to reduce the high rates of child malnutrition in rural El Salvador. Similarly to other Latin American countries, El Salvador is a country of disparities, especially in the health field. There are striking disparities in health indicators and healthcare services in urban and rural areas. Rural peasants are less educated and their children are more likely to suffer from stunting, malnutrition, and anemia compared to their urban counterparts.

Libras de Amor has determined that childhood malnutrition is caused by multiple factors including low socioeconomic status, low maternal education, and the lack of availability of nutritious foods. The program seeks to decrease malnutrition by targeting each one of these factors. It currently serves six municipalities (each one composed of about a dozen rural villages) and provides women and children under the age of five with primary and nutritional healthcare, increases the availability of nutritious foods, introduces strategies to improve family income, and provides education concerning life habits. Up to now, Libras de Amor has decreased malnutrition rates significantly in the municipalities it serves.

This summer PiLA gave me the opportunity to work with a Libras de Amor health team in rural El Salvador. The team I worked with is responsible for Apaneca and Concepción de Ataco, two rural municipalities located in western El Salvador. My team was composed of Aimet (doctor), Yvonne (nutritionist), Leydi (nurse), Angelica (health promoter), and Lesli (health promoter). From Monday to Friday, Aimet, Yvonne and I shared a house in Apaneca with the team that served the municipality of Guaymango.

Each day, my team and I loaded our pick-up truck with medicine, vitamins, medical supplies, and bagged nutritious foods. We then visited two villages where we set up our traveling clinic and monitored the nutritional health of expecting mothers and children under the age of five. We would set up our simple clinic in one of the mother's home. When we got to each home mothers and children from nearby





## Rosa's Story, continued

One of my most memorable memories from this summer is my interaction with the mothers and the children. All of the women I met are loving mothers, honest, and hard-working. The children are beautiful. As I talked to them, I learned that the program gives them much hope. Many mothers confided in me that the program was changing their life. For example, one mother said that before the program she had felt without hope. Through the program, however, she has gained knowledge that has empowered her and enabled her to set up a *nutritienda*, a rural shop sponsored by Libras de Amor which sells nutritious food products.

About 50% of the children in the municipalities our team served are malnourished. About 40% of the mothers are illiterate and teen pregnancy is high. Most live in extreme poverty. It is clear then, that although the program brings rural Salvadoran mothers and children much hope there is much more to be done. Good nutritional health, I believe, is key to educational and thus social and economic advancement. Although it feels great to have been part of the Libras de Amor program, I cannot wait to be a doctor so that I can make a bigger, lasting impact.

Rosa with the medical team in the field.



2009-2010 Fellows



Nicole Amaral, Endeavor Chile, Santiago, Chile



Perla Amsili, Endeavor Argentina, Buenos Aires



Denitza Andjelic, Pro Mujer Bolivia, La Paz



Troy Bilbao-Bastida, Endeavor Mexico City, Mexico



Lara Lorenzetti in Peru



Alexandra Cristea, Innovations for Poverty Action, Bogota, Colombia

## 2009-2010 Fellows



Katie Fallon, Nica-HOPE, Managua,  
Nicaragua



Sarah Federman, Amazon Conservation As-  
sociation, Los Amigos, Peru



Janine Kacprzak, FUNCEDESCRI, San  
Lucas, Guatemala



From Rosa  
Mendoza



Lara Lorenzetti, ProPeru, Cusco, Peru

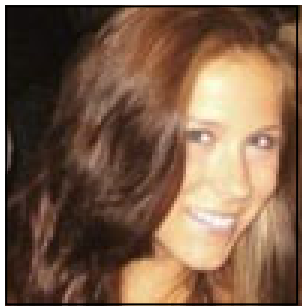


Alyssa Briody, Human Rights Watch, Buenos  
Aires, Argentina

## 2009-2010 Fellows



Joanna Bernstein Zuckerman, IMIFAP,  
Mexico City, Mexico



Kirsten Harmon, Arias Foundation, San  
Jose, Costa Rica



Sasha Sadrai, Endeavor Chile, Patago-  
nia



Greg Snyder, Valle de los Pinos School and  
WINGS-Guate, Parramos, Guatemala

Laura Morales, Amazon Conservation  
Association, Wayquecha, Peru

Vera Kiss, 2008 CEAC Fellow with  
colleagues





## Alumni Updates

After a year in Santiago, Chile, **Mike Solis** is now living in Ireland, where he is a Mitchell Fellow and working on an LLM international human rights law as a Mitchell Scholar at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

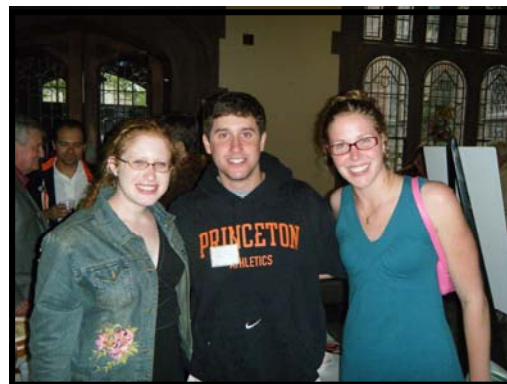
**Boris Spiwak** is also abroad, in London, where he is studying for a Masters in Public and Economic Policy at the London School of Economics.

Following her fellowship at Convivencia Educativa, in Mexico, **Vera Kiss** is at Cambridge, studying for a Masters in Development Studies.

**Ana Cordovil** has returned from her fellowship at Endeavor, Santiago and will be living again in Princeton, as a research assistant for a former professor and helping out at PiLA.

**Stephanie Dashiell** reports from California that "I have just started a 2-year master's program at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at UCSB and I am loving it! After 6 years away from academia, I am really enjoying the intellectual and academic stimulus. I am planning on focusing on Conservation Planning and hope to work for a conservation non-profit when I graduate in 2011."

From Boston, **August Petrillo** writes that "have started my new job at Fidelity Investments as an equity analyst in their Latin America group. My initial focus will be on Brazilian, Mexican and Argentine steel and mining companies, and I expect to eventually broaden to cover energy, chemicals and industrial conglomerates as well. I am based in Boston at the moment but will be permanently posted to the Miami office as of January."





## Letter From the Director

Dear Friends of PiLA,

It's hard to believe that the summer is over and that another school year has just started. The Class of 2010 and other alumni from recent years are already contacting the PiLA office, eager to begin their applications to the program and to embark on the learning opportunity and adventure of a year living and working in Latin America. Last week was Princeton's Career Fair and the PiLA table, manned by Board member Peter Johnson and I, was swamped with eager seniors. I look forward to getting to know them as the application process begins.

This month's newsletter showcases the summer internship of Class of '09er Rosa Mendoza, who is applying to medical school this year and current fellow Lara Lorenzetti who is in Cusco, Peru this year. Both fellows' work involves various public health projects. Public health is a field of great interest to our applicants and we'd like to find several more outstanding NGOs with which to partner for 2010-11, so if you know of any organization you'd recommend, please let me know!

As the application process gets underway, I hope that you will consider making a donation of any size that is meaningful and comfortable to you to support the upcoming group of fellows. PiLA is in great demand on campus and off and we need the help of our supporters to continue to thrive and meet the need for fellowships. While the economy has made it difficult to increase the size of the program and place as many of the qualified Finalists that we would like to name, we still sent 15 fellows this year and hope to send at least 15-20 this coming year. The Board and I hope you will agree with us that PiLA's opportunities are meaningful and significant for these young fellows and for the communities to which they contribute their efforts.

Best wishes for the fall,



Claire Brown '94  
Executive Director

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