

October 2011 Newsletter

Spotlight on Joe Lerman, ProWorld Peru, Urubamba, Peru

I arrived in Peru in July, and have been working with ProWorld in Urubamba ever since. Urubamba is a small, beautiful town in the Andes Mountains. Living here has been an eye-opening experience. I have learned to love a new culture, to live life at a different pace, and to always be open to trying new things. Each morning my neighbor's cow wakes me at 6:00 AM, each afternoon I enjoy Peru's sacred two-hour lunch-break, and each night our town has the most spectacular view of the stars. In the last three months, I have learned so much about both Peruvian culture and development work. I have been both personally and professionally challenged, and it has been an amazing experience.

ProWorld Peru is an organization that aims to improve the lives of Peru's poor through various development projects. Here in Urubamba we direct a cleaner-burning-stoves program, a water-filters production and distribution program, and artisanal women's groups. As a volunteer coordinator, it is my job to help lead volunteers, and manage projects.

A highlight of my job has been my work on our cleaner-burning-stoves project. Since 2003, ProWorld has installed thousands of 'cocinas mejoradas' throughout Peru. The stoves provide both health benefits and economic savings to poor families. Traditional Peruvian stoves are often simply large rocks, with a fire-pit beneath them. These stoves fill homes with smoke and thus cause respiratory and ocular illnesses. Our stove safely removes smoke from houses, and therefore eliminates this health risk. It also reduces the amount of wood families need for cooking, saving them money and decreasing deforestation.



Joe translating for doctors at a clinic

I have helped lead stove installation campaigns throughout the Sacred Valley region. I have worked to help find community partners for future installations, and have learned to build stoves using ceramic bricks and mud. I have loved this opportunity to get my hands dirty. This project is special because it takes place inside the homes of the beneficiaries. Building them a new stove is a great way to get to know families. In the next two months, we are scheduled to in-

we are scheduled to install at least 20 new stoves. I am excited to continue this project.

In August, I also worked as part of a medical outreach group. The group included two doctors, a nurse, and a pharmacist. In collaboration with the Peruvian Ministry of Health, we hosted medical clinics in four different communities, and were able to reach over 200 patients. During the clinics, I served as a translator for English-speaking doctors. Many of our patients had not seen a doctor in years. Furthermore, due to the cost of medicines, many are normally unable to pay for prescriptions. Our clinics were able to diagnose longstanding problems, and also, importantly, distribute free medicines.

I hope to one day be a doctor, and therefore these clinics were a very rewarding experience for me. I loved working so closely with doctors in a clinical setting. It was exciting to contribute to the diagnosis process. More than that, it felt wonderful to know that the prescriptions we filled would help sick people get better. I hope to be a part of more medical outreach efforts over the next nine months.

The last three months have been an amazing experience for me. I have been challenged to adapt to a new job, and a new way of life, and I have loved every minute of it. For everything I have learned, and everything that I have yet to experience here, I am so grateful to PiLA. Thank you, thank you, thank you!



Joe with a newly finished cocinamejadora.



The Urubamba Valley where Joe lives

PiLA Wishes a Warm Welcome and a Hearty “Que te vaya bien!” to the 2011-12 Fellows.

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Peru

Cara Buchanan, Amazon Conservation Association, Villa Carmen
Joe Lerman, ProWorld Peru, Cusco/Urubamba
Alejandro Aco, Metisgaia Red MG, Arequipa

Photos from the Field



PiLA is truly a destination now! Photo by James Williams



Julia Steege, far right, with Fundacion Chile colleagues

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of PiLA,

By now all of our fellows are in the field and truly ensconced in their placements. This month, we are hearing from Joe Lerman, at ProPeru. This is a longstanding partnership and we are so pleased that Joe is thriving in his work.

Although it is only mid-October, my inbox has been filled with notes from interested applicants and I have spent time speaking with at least 100 of them so far. There have been and will be information sessions here on campus, including one with students of Portuguese—as we work on expanding our Brazil program—and others at Georgetown and Columbia, as well as on Skype. While this will make for a busy December, it is well worth the work to determine the PiLAs for 2012-13.

If you have not already donated, I hope you will take this opportunity to do so: <http://www.princeton.edu/~pila/support/index.htm> We need your support now, more than ever. We would like to offer fellowships opportunities to as many of the qualified candidates that we can and thank you, in advance, for what you do to help us achieve this goal. Our fellows bring a lot to the organizations with which they work and enable our partners to accomplish more with their resources than they would otherwise be able. The fellows make the most of their opportunities to delve deeply into international development and the work of launching careers in Latin American topics and the public interest, more broadly.

Thank you for your support and your interest in PiLA.

Best regards,



Claire Brown '94
Executive Director

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