

Health project 'Miski Wawa' Improve nutrition of 150 children in Cusco

Project period: January - December 2014

Evaluation: January to June 2015

SUMMARY

In January 2014, health project 'Miski Wawa' will start in one of the marginal urban zones of the city of Cusco, Peru. The project will run for 12 months (until December 2014), followed by an evaluation of the project half a year later.

The aim of the project is to improve the nutritional status of 150 children (under 6 years) in the slums of Cusco. These children live in very poor families where malnutrition of children and hygiene are serious problems, threatening the health of the family and especially that of the children. This document treats the background of the malnutrition problems in Peru, as well as the three components that are used in our program to battle malnutrition.

Malnutrition in Peru – Project Background

In Peru, malnutrition is a major problem. Malnutrition occurs mainly because children receive an unbalanced diet and/or too little fruit and vegetables. Besides the problem of malnutrition, many households have a very poor level of hygiene, which brings the children parasites and other diseases. For example, it is common to find chickens, guinea pigs and other small livestock walking around freely in the kitchen area, together with the children. Moreover, many families don't have a stove, but cook on a simple fire on the kitchen floor and before eating, nobody washes their hands. These problems, along with malnutrition, are the causes of serious health problems in children.

A major problem is diarrhea, which occurs as a result of an infection that can be spread from one person to another, or by the intake of contaminated food or water. Diarrhea, according to the WHO¹, is the second leading cause of death of children under 5 years. A result of diarrhea is dehydration with a resulting shortage of water, salts and nutrients that are necessary in order to survive and grow. Children with diarrhea are, because of the weakness of their body, then again more vulnerable to malnutrition.

Especially the first years of a child's life are very important when it comes to nutrition, because these first years form a base for the rest of the child's life. Malnutrition can have serious consequences, such as inertia of physical and mental development, low physical resistance, speech defects, blindness, susceptibility to diseases and it may eventually even lead to death. Malnutrition can scar children for the rest of their lives.

In addition to a lack of knowledge about healthy nutrition and hygiene, the economical situation is a problem in most families. Most women in our project are single parents with no income and often with three or more children. Due to a lack of financial resources, they cannot buy healthy – and relatively expensive – food, such as fruits and vegetables.

¹ WHO the World Health Organization

Specifications of the project

Three components of the project:

As mentioned above, malnutrition has several causes. To fight and prevent malnutrition among children, CEDNA developed a program that consists of three components: improving the basic health and nutrition of children and (pregnant) mothers; improving personal and environmental hygiene and improving the economic situation of the mothers, so that they can afford to buy better food for their children.

1) Improving basic health and nutrition

First, the basic health and hygiene of the children should be improved. During the project, 120 mothers with a total of 150 children below 6 years will participate, of which 80 mothers with malnourished children and 40 mothers whose children are at risk of malnutrition. Thus, the project will not only focus on treating the children who are malnourished, but also on prevention of malnutrition through education on healthy eating habits and hygiene.

By training the mothers in health and balanced diet, they will become aware of the importance of giving three healthy meals a day to their children. During the project, we will control the weight and height of the children once every three months, to determine their nutritional situation and, at the end of the project, reach the point where the children have a normal weight and don't suffer anymore from (the risk of) malnutrition.

Because the development of the child already begins before they are born, the health of a mother during and after pregnancy is essential and requires special attention in the first six years of the development of the child. Therefore, also pregnant mothers are included in the program. Through the project, we aim to improve the health of the mothers and increase their access and use of health care, by teaching them about the legal possibilities of the services offered in health care by the state (Peru).



hot meals for the children



mothers with children for health consultancy



length and weight measurements

Further activities include:

- weighing and measuring the children
- workshops for the construction of natural vegetable gardens on the families' own land to promote healthy nutrition
- monitoring and control of pregnant and breastfeeding women in direct collaboration with the Ministry of Health
- practical demonstrative group's sessions with the mothers on health and nutrition
- workshops for pregnant mothers about good nutrition and the prevention of anemia etc.

- two-weekly unannounced visits to the mothers by the project team to check the application of good eating habits
- campaigns on prevention of parasites
- If necessary, referral of mother and child to health services

2) Improving personal and environmental hygiene

Apart from basic health care and nutrition, the hygiene in the house where the family is living is an important factor to improve health. The families participating in the project are poor families with poor hygienic services and a lack of knowledge on how to use their facilities correctly. Usually they do have some kind of a sewage system, but with a drain of inferior quality. Also, there usually is water, but they don't use it in a proper way. For example, water is not boiled before using it, leaving all the bacteria and parasites in the water, with a risk of contagion and infection. The family drinks from this water and washes the dishes with cold, unboiled water. Also, animals and people often live in the same room, and animals are not always taken outside to urinate and/or defecate.

In our project, all mothers receive personal advice, group training and special workshops to improve the hygiene situation in their house. In this manner, the women become aware of topics such as safe drinking water and proper disposal of waste. The women learn to recognize alarm signals (e.g. when babies cannot drink or get breastfeeding, have rapid or poor breathing, suffer from seizures or epileptic attacks, a lot of diarrhea with sunken eyes) and learn to take the necessary actions. At the end of the project the hygiene of 150 households will be improved, so that the children are sick less often and their resistance will have increased accordingly.



workshop in hygiene and healthy food

participant competition healthy kitchen

3) Improving the economic situation

Finally, the project focuses on improving the economic situation of the families. In most cases, the men work in the city of Cusco, particularly in the construction and trade sector, and the women are unemployed. By improving the possibilities of the women on the labor market, they can generate their own income and have the possibility to buy fresh vegetables, fruits, milk, meat, fish etc. **Thus: they directly contribute to better health for the whole family.**

One of the criteria on which the mothers of the project will be selected, is that they already develop some economic activities. They are more likely to succeed and are more motivated to develop themselves. We offer mothers the opportunity to follow the business course in the area of intervention given by the project's own business advisor to the health project. The modules include: ideas for a small business, setting up their own business and family business, sales, marketing, and finance. The expectation is that we will work with about 100 mothers.

During the course, they also get guidance from the business advisor of the project when

writing a business plan and obtaining microcredit with NGOs or institutions specialized in this area. Also the business consultant does home visits for personal advice about their own small business. The courses take about 4-6 months and finish with an examination. At the end of the project, 70 % of the mothers have improved their already existing company or have started a small business with which they can generate their own income.

The mothers of the health project may take advantage of courses offered by the training center of CEDNA such as baking, pastry and cooking. Many mothers want to sell meals and cakes and use this course to start their own small business.



Certificate for mother of health project



Mothers participating in sewing course



Students cooking course training center CEDNA

For all three components group training is scheduled. In some cases the training is only directed at the mothers; in other cases, the trainings also include the fathers and people from involved organizations, such as employees of the health posts, municipal officials and boards of the communities.



Group trainings and personal business advice of the mothers

Organization of the project

The project team of CEDNA will guide and advise the families. The team is led by a coordinator. The group courses and personal consultancy are held by qualified staff of CEDNA in the areas of health and economy.

The projects of CEDNA are directed by the Dutch Cora Staats. She works with a team of well-trained Peruvians who all have their own responsibility within the projects.

The local communities are involved in the project from the beginning. Awareness on the importance of counteracting malnutrition will be raised, together with an explanation of how this can be achieved. CEDNA will then conclude a cooperation contract with the communities who are interested are selected to participate in the program. The project always concerns neighborhoods where poverty and malnutrition are prevalent.

Funding

Unfortunately, the Peruvian government does not provide grants for such projects. Despite the richness in resources (gold, silver, copper, etc.), Peru is a poor country, where corruption and mismanagement prevail. Especially the poor have to suffer. For that reason they are our target group.

The estimated cost of our health project for 2014 amounts to \$ 62,209². This means that the average cost per family amounts to approximately \$ 414,69. There is already an amount available, but we still need approximately \$ 10,000 dollars for this project.

Evaluation and reporting

There will be quarterly and final reports of the project. Half a year after completion of the project, a final evaluation will be carried out.

Every month, CEDNA publishes a newsletter that donors can receive by email. All project reports will be published both on the website of Global Giving and on the website of CEDNA, together with up to date information about the project progress.

² \$ 1 = € 0,74. Thus, the total amount of the project in euros is € 46,204.- in total, and € 308.- per family.