

Chaupimonte Community Mill:

Supporting Education Through Coffee Development in Oxapampa

Lucy Marshall and Eva McKinsey — Colorado College — June 15th–August 15th — Oxapampa, Peru

Context/Background:

Peru's diverse population has seen discriminatory social and racial hierarchies dating back to colonial times, throughout independence, and persisting into the present. With its population still split among Asháninka and Yánesha peoples and descendants of European settlers, Oxapampa (a small mountain town of about 10,000 people) remains a microcosm of the colonizer-colonized power dynamic. This power imbalance culminated in prolonged internal violence between the Peruvian Military and terrorist guerilla groups from the 1980s to the late 1990s, catching indigenous groups in the crossfire. Rural mountain villages like Oxapampa experienced the country's highest death and disappearance rates, targeting indigenous peoples (and specifically Asháninkas) as the largest victim group. Of the 55,000 Asháninkas living in Peru at the start of the internal conflict, 10,000 were forcibly displaced, 5,000 were captured by extremist guerrilla groups, 10,000 were killed, and up to 40 Asháninka communities disappeared entirely.¹ Oxapampa remains a traumatized and fragmented community whose indigenous leaders have agreed to avoid discussing the internal conflict at all. The area has experienced severe economic depression, stunted education, and continuing community fragmentation with little support in recovery efforts since the internal conflict.

The racial prejudices that fueled the internal conflict can still be seen in Oxapampa's primary economic activity: coffee production. The power dynamics among European-descended landowners and indigenous workers continue to perpetuate these tensions. Landowners keep the bulk of crop sales profits, and indigenous farmers (who are working their ancestral lands) are treated poorly and earn very little, forcing many to turn to dangerous work with illegal drug trafficking in the area.²

Oxapampa is known globally for its coffee production, exporting well over 25 tons of high-quality coffee each year. However, it has been a relatively extractive industry, lacking efficient and empowering business practices and workers' rights standards. As it stands, farmers in Oxapampa must bring their harvest to an outside processing plant, where their coffee is de-pulped, dried and sold. The transportation to this plant is very expensive, and it disqualifies Oxapampa coffee from many direct trade partnership opportunities, because the Oxapampa beans are mixed with beans from the mill's other clients, as opposed to remaining single-origin.

In recent years, the global coffee industry has turned to sourcing directly from small, specialty farms which exhibit ethical and sustainable practices. Domestic and international roasters are willing to pay higher prices for ethically sourced, high-quality beans as long as certain environmental and labor standards are met. This sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship is known as direct trade. Thus, the coffee industry has the potential to provide honorable work opportunities with more balanced power dynamics and earnings. Susana Rubio, Oxapampa local and owner of Chaupimonte Farm, lived through years of internal violence and has made it a lifetime goal to improve community relationships, education, and farming practices in Oxapampa, starting with her own farm and extending throughout the region. Her long-term vision holds that improvements to the coffee operation will not only strengthen community relations but also provide a steadier and flourishing source of economic opportunity that will allow money to be reinvested in the community. Specifically, the community needs more funds and attention to its education system, which has greatly suffered and failed to recover since the period of internal violence. Susana was Lucy's host mother while studying abroad in Peru, and they have been discussing this dream of Susana's for two years. Lucy and Eva (the writers of this proposal) came up with this grassroots project together to help Susana and the community achieve this goal of both improving community relations and providing economic assistance to the school by developing a sustainable coffee operation in Oxapampa.

Project Visions:

Our project is twofold: on the one hand, we would like to provide immediate assistance to the local school by installing internet and purchasing two computers, and on the other, we would like to ensure long-term economic growth and partnership between the coffee economy and the education system through the development of a community mill.

We propose to work with the immediate community to develop a mill for the coffee farmers in Oxapampa. This project will empower members of the coffee industry, promote community growth and conflict resolution, and serve as a center for sustainability education both for farmers and local youth. Specifically, we will build a roof on an existing structure at Chaupimonte Farm, construct solar drying beds, and install washing wells. A community-based mill will allow production and processing activity to stay in the local economy and make the coffee more viable for direct trade partnerships, which will increase the value of the product and improve workers' conditions according to direct trade standards. In collaboration with the local school, the mill will also serve as a center for sustainability education and community building. We will hold workshops on sustainable growing practices, direct trade coffee standards, smallholder farm collectives, and workers' rights and safety. We will lead these workshops with the help of our direct trade advisors (listed below). Additionally, we will share export models from another farm in the region (Villa Rica), which has already established healthy

¹ Commission for Truth and Reconciliation <[http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20V/SECCION%20TERCERA-Los%20Escenarios%20de%20la%20violencia%20\(continuacion\)/2.%20HISTORIAS%20REPRESENTATIVAS%20DE%20LA%20VIOLENCIA/2.8%20LOS%20PUEBLOS%20INDIGENAS%20Y%20ASHANINKAS.pdf](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20V/SECCION%20TERCERA-Los%20Escenarios%20de%20la%20violencia%20(continuacion)/2.%20HISTORIAS%20REPRESENTATIVAS%20DE%20LA%20VIOLENCIA/2.8%20LOS%20PUEBLOS%20INDIGENAS%20Y%20ASHANINKAS.pdf)>

² "Peruvian Indigenous Leader Demands an End to Drug Trafficking Invading Her Area" <<http://eldia.es/agencias/8352862-CAN-PER-IND-GENAS-Prevision-Lider-indigena-peruana-exige-acabe-narcotrafico-invade-zona>>

partnerships and exportation practices. Including local students in this education is an important step in changing the legacy of oppression in the community and coffee economy. We will also use this center for other community-building programs, such as after-school activities and community service projects. This new model will create healthier relationships between workers and landowners by encouraging direct trade labor standards, empower the youth by encouraging involvement in local coffee operations, and provide the financial boost needed for the coffee business to give back to the community's education system.

In order to provide immediate assistance to the education system in Oxapampa, we will purchase two computers and install Internet at the local school. This has been requested by the school's director and will allow both students and teachers to participate in a more modernized process of learning and teaching. Education has a proven potential to contribute to stability in post-conflict areas,³ and it is especially important in communities like Oxapampa that have been historically resistant to sharing information and confronting opposing viewpoints. Our hope is that this will be the first of many developments in the education system. Financial contributions from the coffee operation will drive and help fund future improvements.

Partnerships:

Paul Cebul: Founder of Reach Trade Co., partnering with COOPERU and NARSA (Negociaciones Agroindustrial Arevalo S.A.), has established relationships with coffee farmers and collectives in the Peruvian Central Highlands. He is currently advising us on our project.

Maria Margarita Aranda Zevallos: Director of the local school (Acahuachanan).

Sean Buckles: Owns Building3 Coffee Roasters in Colorado Springs, expert on direct trade standards, importation, and specialty coffee. Sean has agreed to train us in the processes he uses when visiting small international coffee farms to consider establishing direct trade relationships. He will advise us before traveling to Oxapampa and while we are there via email.

Susana Rubio: Local coffee farmer and community organizer; she has been very active in changing the coffee economy to empower local growers. She was also Lucy's host mother while studying abroad in Peru.

Molly Laverty: Manager of Sustainable Green Coffee Supply and Procurement at Coffee Bean International (based in the US). She has agreed to act as consultant when needed.

Tessa Allen de Oliveira: Friend, Colorado College alumna, conducted in-depth collaborative research on the Peruvian internal conflict of the 80s and 90s while in Lima, committed volunteer for the project.

Project Logistics:

Phase I (Winter 2017): Coordinate with local members of farming community and the local school to raise awareness about project and increase community involvement.

Phase II (Spring 2017): Coordinate transportation and solidify partnerships for project.

Phase III (June 15-18): Arrive in Lima, purchase materials, and drive to Oxapampa.

Phase IV (June 18-July 30): Arrive in Oxapampa, hold community meeting and begin construction on the center and mill, community barn raiser event, and prepare for harvest.

Phase V (July 30-August 15): Post-harvest, processing and workshops.

Phase VI (August 15-30): First steps in establishing direct trade partnerships: send product to potential buyers, Sean Buckles and Paul Cebul for classification and grading. Discuss possibility of developing trade relationships.

Member Qualifications:

Eva and Lucy both studied abroad in Peru, are fluent in Spanish, and have conducted significant research on the dynamics of the internal violence and the history of conflict in Peru. Lucy has several years of carpentry experience: building a tinyhouse in northern Vermont, training at Hammerstone Carpentry School, and working at the CC Carpentry shop. She also has experience with food business startups and local agricultural development (through Barnraiser Company, Pot Pie Farm, and Know Good Food). Eva has extensive experience with community organizing through her field work on various political campaigns as well as experience in event and program planning through her work in the Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires and the Colorado College Career Center. Furthermore, during her gap year before attending Colorado College, she briefly lived in a rural community in Panama where she helped run the daily operations and coordinate the weekly activities of the local community center.

A Sustained Impact:

Beyond the immediate assistance to the school and coffee operation that we will provide, the long-term goal for our project is sustained community growth and conflict resolution through economic revitalization, more balanced power dynamics among groups, and improved quality of life for historically marginalized indigenous peoples. The direct trade partnership we hope to establish will ensure long-term profitability, honorable employment, and sustainable practices in the area. The new community mill will allow profits to stay in the local economy, and eventually a portion of those profits will be used toward improving the local school system. Susana Rubio has agreed to donate a percentage of the profits she earns from coffee production to the Acahuachanan school beginning with the 2017 harvest. Beyond economic stimulation and its contribution to education, the mill will also provide a space for community gathering, knowledge and skill-sharing, and youth and worker empowerment.

³ The Role of Education in Peacebuilding <https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/EEPCT_Peacebuilding_LiteratureReview.pdf>