

Peru

Impacts of Climate Change

Climate change in Peru is affected by the El Niño, a weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean that has always influenced Peru's climate. Due to higher sea temperatures, winters in Peru has become extreme and for communities living in the high Andes, it has had devastating impacts on their lives. These changes include:

- Increases in sea temperatures, high winds, sea level and coastal surges
- Glaciers in retreat, accelerated melting
- Increased risk of glacial lake bursts, avalanches and landslides
- More rainfall in some areas, less in others (drought and floods)
- Conflicts over water use
- Irrigated agriculture affected
- Rainforest area reduced; savannah increased



Practical Action Project

Over the past decade, the effects of climate change have taken an increasing toll on the poorest and most remote communities in the Andes, many of whom live as high as 4000 metres above sea level. Winter after winter, they face the fraije – a phenomenon of intense cold never experienced by their ancestors. In 2004 10,000 alpaca perished in the severe winter high up in the Andes and potato crops were devastated.

Alpaca

In Peru, alpacas are vital to small communities in the Andes. The alpaca is a domesticated animal similar in appearance to a llama. People depend on them for all sorts of things:

- for milk, cheese and occasionally meat
- manure to burn as cooking fuel
- for their wool, which is extremely insulating, and is used for clothing, bedding, and sold to make a small income
- for transporting their goods of alpaca fibre and potatoes for miles across mountainous terrain to the nearest market
- to bring vital medicine and food back to the village

Without alpacas, the whole community faces a crisis.

Shelters

Practical Action has worked with community members to help the alpacas through these harsh winters by helping to build strong, durable shelters for the alpacas. New shelters can provide shelter for 50 alpacas – all year round. This means that in winter, the weak and young can be kept warm, and survive until the spring. In the warmer weather, the shelters can house pregnant alpacas – this is especially critical as miscarriages caused by the cold can mean the herds take many years to recover.

These shelters have also served another purpose – of providing a sheltered, central place for communities to meet.



This photo was taken soon after an official opening of an alpaca shelter in February 2005. It was a time of celebration with music, dancing, speeches and alpaca stew.

A bottle of beer was smashed with a hammer to mark the official occasion and the gratitude the community felt for the work of Practical Action.



Personal story - Pedro Valeriano Lope

Pedro has a wife and 8 children. He has been breeding alpaca for 20 years and he has a herd of 200. Pedro has been trained by Practical Action and is now the local Kamayoq.

A Kamayoq is someone selected by their community to attend training by Practical Action in techniques needed to help protect their animals by learning about veterinary skills and learning about crop cultivation.

Pedro learned how to construct a shelter in which to keep his alpaca in the winter between the months of December and February. He said,

‘now I don’t lose any alpaca to the cold over the winter and I have enough income to support my family.’

