

Hatters Explorer Scout Unit's Greenhouse Project in the Peruvian Andes

Viacha is a mountain community in the Peruvian Andes, in the Cusco region, overlooking the Sacred Valley. It is remote and extremely poor; the community struggle to grow any food other than potatoes because their crops don't survive the freezing conditions overnight and the ground is predominantly rock which stops anything from growing the dry season. Viacha is several hours from the nearest settlement with any shops so for the vast majority in the village, buying food isn't an option.



We arranged with a charity called Living Heart Peru to build and finance a greenhouse made from mud brick walls, natural cement, wooden pillars and supporting roof and a plastic sheet with irrigation so that the community can now grow food all year. The greenhouse will be used to grow; lettuce, spinach, beet, radish, parsley, coriander, chard, cabbage, carrot, broccoli, turnip, celery, onion, zucchini and tomatoes.



It wasn't easy, but we have made a huge difference to the lives of people in this community. We were frustrated by not getting there until 3 days after originally scheduled as a result of the weather; the mountain road to Viacha was hard enough in the dry, it would have been dangerous and foolish to attempt it in the rain so we had to be patient and get the work done in a shorter time. The rain also affected the construction

because mud bricks needed longer to dry out.

Before we left Viacha, we build 90% of a greenhouse is 12m long, 7m wide and the roof slopes from 3.5 to 2.5m. With the help of all the money we fundraised, we paid for this, the tools, some raw materials, surveys of the site, expenses for a charity volunteer who spent time in the village before we arrived preparing them, the seeds and fertiliser. We paid a group of ladies in the village to cater for us including the cooking equipment, enough food to feed them and their families, crockery and cutlery that the village will now enjoy. Clothes, toothbrushes, pencils, notepads and gifts were also taken for the whole community.





The greenhouse was completed (the lid was put on) after we left. We paid a few days wages for some members of the community to do this and now we are into the next phase of our project; Living Heart Peru will be in Viacha when school starts (they have a newish primary school with one just one small class) to run workshops for the children and teachers to ensure that the greenhouse is managed and they reap the benefits.

The Explorers mixed with the children from the village, made strong friendships with the Peruvian Scouts we had with us as guests in Viacha, worked well with the three members of the community who helped us with construction and they worked extremely hard. They really did themselves proud the entire time.

In Viacha and villages like it, education is limited to Primary only (and the standard is pretty poor). When children are too old for Primary education, some of the boys are sent away from the village for secondary education, some are sent away to work and the girls have nothing. Some will leave the village for work but most will not. There are only two adult women in Viacha who can read and write. In partnership with Living Heart Peru and with the help of our new Scout friends in Peru, we are planning a new education programme for girls in the villages – any surplus funds we hold from our fundraising will be invested straight into this.



Outside of Viacha; Machu Picchu was absolutely stunning, Cusco fascinating, the whole Sacred Valley beautiful and we loved our time in Pisac (in particular the markets and Ulrike's Café who put up with us – and have probably retired, now).

In Peru, the team leader worked brilliantly and back home, the In Touch partnership worked tremendously well, too. The Explorers were absolutely wonderful. They made this trip the unforgettable adventure that it was. The way that they looked after one another, embraced everything; worked so hard, showed bravery, patience and humour the whole way through was incredible – they were awesome.

Thank you to all those who helped, advised, donated and made it all possible.

