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It has been just over 3 weeks since I arrived at the big blue doors of *Pisco Sin Fronteras*, and exactly one year since I arrived - alone and absolutely terrified – in Pisco for the first time. The familiarity of the town and my memories from last year are still so strong that I found it extremely difficult to believe that I have been gone for so long, it feels just like coming home.

Before leaving the UK, I was concerned that perhaps I had been foolish to return to PSF, in that it could never possibly compare to the life changing experience I had here last summer. The faces are almost all different, but the atmosphere and the attitude of the volunteers is pretty much exactly as I remembered it. It is a hugely invigorating and uplifting experience to live and work amongst people – both Peruvians and volunteers – who are so dedicated to positive change in the town of Pisco.

Upon arriving in Peru, I met with the dean of the Catholic University in Lima (PUCP), Mr. Marcial Blondet. I had previously interviewed him for my university dissertation on the topic of low-income and seismically-resistant reconstruction methods in disaster zones and was keen to follow up on this by meeting him in person. Since the early 1970s, he has dedicated his career to the development of cheap, easily-implementable and safe building techniques for earthquake zones. Our meeting was hugely inspiring, and he gave me some contacts and literature with which I will be attempting to implement such seismically-resistant techniques into the ongoing projects at PSF. I believe that links with other organizations working in the field, such as *CarePeru* may well be of benefit in the future.

Last year, I became involved with the design development of a canteen and toilet block for a school in the neighbourhood of San Clemente on the outskirts of Pisco. Due to a number of financial and sourcing problems, this project is currently still under construction and therefore this seemed like an appropriate project to engage with for my first few weeks at PSF. The school was destroyed by the earthquake, and a large structurally-unsound, condemned building still remains within the grounds which unfortunately is unsecured and sometimes used by the children. There are very limited sanitation facilities on site and nowhere for the children to eat so the project will be of huge benefit once it is completed. A local *maestro* called Felix is heading the project whose input and guidance is invaluable on-site. I worked consistently on this project for three weeks since arriving here at PSF and was involved with many concrete pours for the floors, ramps and stairs and rendering the exterior. It is most definitely hard work – a lot of digging, carrying and heavy lifting – but the sense of accomplishment which accompanies the stiff muscles is most definitely worth it. I have found that a lot of volunteers, including myself, surprise themselves by how hard they can push themselves and I am definitely more capable on a building site than I expected I

would be, even with last years experience! The kids around the site are great as well, very curious – the older ones are keen to practice their English and the younger kids just want to play with the gringos (foreigners) in their school.

With the major construction works finished at Maria Parado, I have changed projects to a community bathroom and shower block in the poor, slum neighbourhood of Jesus de Nazareth. The houses here are extremely basic, almost all of them lacking the most basic sanitation facilities and I have no doubt the toilets and showers will be of huge benefit to the community. The local people are hugely friendly and (those who can afford it) take it in turns to cook lunch for the volunteers every day as a way of saying thank you. I was invited onto the project in order to learn to brick lay, so that I can train volunteers in this after the other long termers leave. The roof construction is now underway and the project should be completed next week.

As happy as I am to be back in Pisco, the differences in the town since last year are unfortunately few. The tireless work of volunteers and local people to improve living conditions since the earthquake can at times feel like a drop in the ocean when you are faced with block after block after block of esterra (straw mat) slums, where the kids play in the dirt streets amongst packs of stray dogs. I have a strong belief that improvements in living conditions can have a vast impact on a person's quality of life, however in this situation where a limited number of volunteers are working with very limited funding it is clearly possible to reach and affect more people via community projects rather than the construction of individual houses. My opinions on the matter of post disaster reconstruction - which I developed in my university dissertation - have somewhat changed in light of this and I am looking forward to my involvement in community and educational projects which are currently running at PSF. There are a number of diverse projects on site at PSF, including various community projects such as English teaching, "Ludoteca" a daycare centre and "Ecovida" an environmental awareness programme.

I am having difficulty in comprehending how I could possibly give as much back to PSF and the people of Pisco as I take from the experience they give me, and I am proud to call this place home for the summer.