



**ASSOCIATION LOS CHICOS DE CUSCO-TITICACA**  
**a book to learn, a school canteen to grow**

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**CUSCO EXPRESS N°69**  
**Special HUCHUY YACHAQ**

In Cusco-Express, Marlene, founder and current director, tells us the story of Huchuy Yachaq and presents the projects of the association.  
Annie and Brigitte, volunteers from Bordeaux, provided 3 weeks of musical entertainment to the little Chicos.



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# HUCHUY YACHAQ

## The commitment of a district for the education of children

Since 2015, the Association Los Chicos de Cusco has been helping financially, with the support of volunteers, the association Huchuy Yachaq in Cusco. Located in the district of Hermanos Ayar and the District of Santiago, on the hills overlooking the historic centre of Cusco, the Huchuy Yachaq association is born from the will of a handful of parents and Marlene, street educator, to offer willing children a place of resource and education.

### *« Marlene, what means Huchuy Yachaq? »*

"Huchuy Yachaq is a Quechua sentence meaning 'little knowledge'. When the association was founded, we worked mainly with street children. They are exposed to many risks but they find their way ...

### *« How did Huchuy Yachaq start? »*

"The association was formally established in May 2007. I was working as a street educator in Cusco but I could hardly organize activities with the children because they were constantly busy washing cars, selling postcards, cleaning shoes ... One day they invited me to come and meet them in their district. I climbed up there on a Sunday - there was no road at that time - and I met people from the community building a path. We visited the house where we are now and that was abandoned.



With the help of volunteers and the community we have restored this place and launched the "useful holidays" by inviting people from Cusco to animate educational and artistic activities for children.

After 3 months of volunteering in Hermanos Ayar, I was invited to the community's general assembly. They asked me to go on with the activities.

Thus was born Huchuy Yachaq as a legal entity and civil association. Our main goal was to provide children educational activities to reduce their time spent on the street. We started with the creation of the library because we believe that **education** is the means that will allow children to leave the street. I mean education not only by the right to education and schooling, but also as an educational support, hardware support, comprehensive development. The children of the neighbourhood, in addition to educational deficiencies, face problems of violence, lack of self-esteem, discrimination and stigma.

The first year we began by registering every child in school and provide school supplies for equitable schooling conditions. Today only 1% of the children in Hermanos Ayar is not going to school. "

### **"What are the main goals?"**

Our main goal and guideline is the education of children in all its aspects, combined with working with families. Because what we do is meaningless if the family does not participate. Today, children are no longer left to themselves as before the establishment of the centre, when they were going to sell postcards or polishing shoes ... If they are now working in the street it is with their mom or older brother. But they are not alone, they are no longer street children. We helped in this change but also the community. A united community that participates is essential.

### **"How to involve the community in Huchuy Yachaq?"**

"When we created the association, we agreed with the community a commitment of 15 years after which the project would be transferred to the community. So parents manage the centre and set their own goals. Fifteen years is a generation of children; we are in our ninth year ... Parents participated in the construction and improvement of the centre but also in decision-making in general meetings. It is not only the neighbourhood committee that decides; everyone must feel invested. I think our presence will bear fruit when it will no longer be necessary that we stay. "

### **"What are the activities offered by Huchuy Yachaq?"**

"The first line of work is education and development of children. This concerns the kindergarten, regulated by the Ministry of Education, library and free time activities. We seek to consolidate the academic learning but also to develop, through artistic workshops, important skills and life skills: learning to be independent, to think critically, learn to talk, to be in relationship, to overcome conflicts ... so that children can grow in other areas and face the difficulties of life.

The Santiago neighbourhood has the largest percentage of working children, the highest alcohol consumption rate, illiteracy and crime ... So these are children who face many problems and who have great difficulties in integrating new social spaces. We make sure

they visit and experience other places, they have experiences and meetings outside the district, so they can feel valued and they are not afraid to face new situations. "

- "At the same time, we have the " school for parents ". A kind of sharing of experience and mediation about "how to be parents." Violence and conflicts that arise within the family are often linked to personal conflicts that have not been settled. Because many are too young parents, 17-18.... And because raising a child requires maturity ...

That's the dynamic we're trying to boost. They spend all their time trying to solve their financial problems ... we offer a word of space to facilitate communication between the couple. And we organize several times a year family activities (sports meetings ...) because it is sharing common activities and dreaming together that consolidates the family. "

### **"Can you tell us about women's workshop?"**



"We started working with the women of the neighbourhood with the aim that they can spend more time with their children. Most of them are itinerant sellers in Cusco. But this implies that they leave their children all day. We felt it was important to develop income-generating activities that allow them to stay with their children. We organized sewing and jewellery courses and opened a workshop, "Mama Quilla" but we had great difficulties to sell the products and we had to close the shop. And as long as we do not sell, we cannot reopen it because half of the money from the sales is going to the mothers and the other half is used for the purchase of equipment. "

### **"Today, what are the projects and prospects of the association? "**

"The neighbourhood asked us to work with them but we have to find funds to finance the activities. We would also reproduce this type of experience which I believe is successful and changes the future of local youth. We need to validate our experience Hermanos Ayar and solicit government subsidies. We started working with the municipality of Santiago but it takes time .... "



"Thanks to those who help us like students and volunteers from Cusco and elsewhere, thank you Jean-Gabriel and the association "Los Chicos de Cusco" for the commitment to help us throughout this year 2016 because the operation of Huchuy Yachaq is 00% dependent on the support we receive. "

*"We are talking about 76 children, it is their life and not statistics ...  
Muchísimas ... gracias! "*



### **A musical animation project for children of Cusco in March 2016**

We are two young retirees, Brigitte and Annie, respectively trainer for adults and school teacher and both musicians. To celebrate our retirement we made plans for a two-month



trip in Latin America. To begin this journey we decided to live a volunteer experience with the association Los Chicos de Cusco in an area where we have the skills, "music." Upon our arrival in Cusco we have invested in the purchase of three instruments: a guitar, a violin and a drum. And

that's what armies of instrumental background and our songs that we have integrated into music outreach project for children of the community centre Huchuy Yachaq supported since early 2016 by Los Chicos de Cusco, in the neighbourhood Hermanos Ayar, a popular suburb Cusco. We intervened with 80 children in the kindergarten Las Hormiguitas and homework workshop set up for primary and middle school students. We have offered workshops about an hour for each level in the presence of teachers and facilitators. For us music is a universal

language that creates the beyond differences link (language, culture ...).The aim of our project was to enable children to live a sensory personal experience, to practice a mode of non-verbal communication through the rhythms, sounds, songs, gestures, dance, live a collective experience and opening to the outside world.



The menu workshops: listening games and rhythm, vocal games, rhymes French, Spanish and Peruvian, mimed or danced round, accompanied by percussion, violin or guitar, voice work: singing, group singing, sing together and discovery of the three families of instruments (wind string and percussion) with the sensory discovery through manipulation .

**A show presentation workshops by children closed the two-week animation.**



*Musical workshops allow everyone to work his listening skills and concentration, get involved with others, capacity needed throughout the school learning curriculum.*



"Our discovery of Cusco life has made contact with the population but used the bus to get to the outlying district of Hermanos Ayar. Contact with children is a natural fit because they were very quickly adopted and were very receptive and very curious. They seemed happy to come to kindergarten or community centre and it is with great pleasure that we met them every day for 2 weeks. Despite the poverty in which some of them live, they knew we communicate their joy of life and I thank them. "

### **Annie**

"This experience was very rich because we were able to integrate ourselves with the neighbourhood and share through this collective project of the highlights with the people involved in the schooling of their children, with the team of teachers and facilitators, but also with foreign volunteers essential to the life of the school. We also got to talk with mothers who founded the LAM QUILLA Association to develop their employability by creating a jewellery workshop that allows them to learn a trade and to live gradually. "



### **Brigitte**

We offered our instruments to the Association Los Chicos de Cusco. They may be used by future volunteers to continue this musical awareness with the children of Cusco. Many thanks to the parents and professionals who welcomed us with kindness. This humanitarian and volunteer experience was a first experience for us and the enthusiasm it has generated is an invitation to repeat it in the future.

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**Many thanks to Brigitte and Annie for their great project and many thanks to Christine for this very interesting article.**

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