

Dialogue to accompany Power Point presentation

Azul Wasi 2008

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Slide 1

Azul Wasi (Introduction)

2mins 30 seconds

It is with disappointment that I have to be sat here in Lima typing these words, one of the many tasks I have to do here before leaving for the UK on the 15th June, instead of sharing your hopefully warm early summer evening tonight. I am actually winging my way west, probably on the M4 and possibly we will be able to have a short Q and A session from a lay-by via my 'batphone'. If not I am available for any queries about Azul Wasi by phone or email after today.

I have been in Peru since January working with Azul Wasi, the educational communities, local NGOs, local authorities and business all of whom in some way are involved or are wishing to be involved in our programmes. My work is essentially as an educator.

My 20 years of experience in education span both teaching and educational development in the UK and Peru. My experience and specialism have been specifically in what we now refer to as 'sustainability education'. Working with educational communities in both the UK and Peru provides a natural emphasis on the vital 'global dimension' to educational programmes. My work today in the schools around Cusco is as a direct result of the boys going to local schools.

The organisation that I have established, GlobalEd, shortly to be registered as a Community Interest Company here in the UK, is a reflection and realistic response to the needs of education in both the UK and a developing nation such as Peru.

Inevitably whilst working within sustainability education in both regions, contact with local communities is not limited to those directly linked to school activities. Pretty much every aspect of life is covered in sustainability issues, not one corner of society unfortunately is left unconsidered.

For anyone who enjoys a radio show that follows obscure links between items, the story of Azul Wasi is one that could easily illustrate the complexities of the 21st century, the interactions between rich and poor nations, interactions that appear to be beneficial but have their sting.

One of the consequences of increased tourism is the presence of more young people on the streets of Cusco, attracted by the prospect of earnings from tourism. Cusco is a very special case because of its new status as one of the hottest places to visit. UK school expeditions, SAGA trips, UK charity destination for 'Charity Challenge', GAP Year students, and so on.

Seven years on from overseeing a small scale project with street children in Cusco, I have had the pleasure of being involved with what is now called Azul Wasi. Times have certainly been difficult but what is certain is that the boys and all those involved can see hope. Step by step the programme is stronger.

Slide 2 Cusco, Peru 1 min 30 seconds

Cusco is a special case within Peru. It deservedly enjoys the status of being an increasingly popular destination for a diverse range of visitors from around the world. With those visitors there are obvious economic injections, but how far do they impact? How many of the approaching half million residents of Cusco actually benefit? Not many if the protests seen earlier this year in Cusco are anything to go by.

Migration to the city is not restricted to families with better prospects and contacts. Youngsters, who for a range of reasons are homeless, gravitate to Cusco like hundreds of Dick Whittington's. The majority of the youngsters on the streets are there as economic providers to marginal but stable Cusco families. There are the very few that have no support, horrendous histories and no hope of integrating into society. If not identified, their future is one of little opportunity at best and at worst a life of destitution.

Alcides Jordan of the Peruvian National Police, working with the Family Unit in Cusco, had been facing the problems of homeless youngsters, eventually persuaded his bosses to allow the use of an abandoned farm in their care as a home for the boys most at risk. The project Colibri home for boys was established in early 2003, allowing up to 15 boys to restart their lives.

Slide 3 Project Colibri 1 min 30 seconds

The farm at Lucre proved not only the need for such provision, but also the type of provision that was needed in these special cases. Many of the boys have had chaotic and sometimes violent pasts, often with little or no education. Often they have led solitary lives being passed along a line of people who have had little interest in their well being. They are left with little trust.

Alcides' approach with the boys has been one of gaining that trust and providing opportunities for the boys. A home, people to care for them, schooling and opportunities to learn occupational skills for the day when they have to leave, that's part of what they need. It's a tall challenge but preparing these boys for life has to be the goal.

Project Colibri at Lucre sadly came to an end in late 2006. Corrupt officials within the police and the misplaced or misunderstood desires of a foreign 'humanitarian' organisation orchestrated events that led to the home's closure. Steps had already been in place to start building an independent and dedicated home for the boys. The National Institute of Culture had stated their disapproval of a historic building being used as an orphanage. This process was now urgent and 2007 saw Azul Wasi rise from the 'pampa' nearby to Lucre at the town of Oropesa.

Slide 4 Oropesa 1 minute

The main road south from Cusco to Lake Titicaca passes through many interesting villages. 30 minutes drive from Cusco is the town of Oropesa, 'Heavy Gold' in English. Oropesa boasts over 500 bread ovens and is predictably famous for providing much of Cusco with one of its basics. It's a quiet town that over the past years has developed economically. Prices of land have risen acutely, more shops and cafes are opening and the local private school does not appear to be short of students.

Social development often lags somewhat behind economic development. Many youngsters are working through the night and morning to provide Cusco with its bread. If not in the ovens, the youngsters could be in the fields high above the town.

The main square is quaint and reflects the importance of bread with a statue of woman with bread basket. A church recently renovated boasts frescos and wall paintings dating back to the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Neighbouring Tipon has a fine selection of Inca archaeological sites.

Through a donation from a Taunton based charity half a hectare of undrained land was acquired mid way between Oropesa and Tipon.

Slide 5 Azul Wasi new build 1 minute

2007 was a frantic year of building, but before that could start the land had to be drained. In the process of that task, two JCBs were broken and a snake discovered, both being signs of bad spirits. Three shamen later and US\$ 75 lighter in the budget, offerings had been made to Pachamama (Mother Earth), local labourers were content and the build could start in earnest.

With scenes reminiscent of popular TV house build programmes, teams of volunteers, local labourers and craftsmen set about building the basic constructions. Budgets and time were against us, but the result of the cheaper wooden construction to adobe has been more than satisfactory. More recent buildings are in longer lasting more sustainable adobe brick.

Finally in late December 2007 Azul Wasi was able to receive its first boys and was up to its capacity of 10 boys by the end of February 2008.

Slide 6 Transport 1 minute

Transport has been a continuous problem for the programme, restricted to the personal vehicles of those working with Azul Wasi. I have seen Alcides destroy three (arguably already destroyed) cars. The nature of the locations in rural areas and the need to be transporting building materials, food and bodies around over rough terrain has taken its toll.

At present Azul Wasi has access to a broken mini bus and a Beetle, 'El Sapo'. Transport will be one of those issues, one that in an ideal world we would not need, but the realistic approach is one that requires transport.

We are in the early stages of proposing to a school in Kent a project that will provide a small minibus and trailer and later a four wheel drive 'Hilux' style truck.

For me as a keen cyclist and considering the location of the home, I would like to see the boys with a collection of well maintained bicycles, perhaps even a workshop offering bicycle repair services to others in the towns of Oropesa and Tipon.

Slide 7 The Boys 1 minute 30 seconds

Each of the boys has their own separate story to tell on their journey to Azul Wasi. A couple of them are from the original Project Colibri, but most are new to us. They are aged between 5 years and 17 years and come from all over Peru. I have been on four trips to Cusco since being in Peru from January. In that time I have hopefully built up the boys trust as one of those people who is there to help them turn their lives around.

For the older boys we are already considering their longer term education. We have to think about how these boys are going to get through college and train to have a career. Placing the boys in work experience situations so they can have an informed idea of the path they want to take.

Certainly in the past 5 months I have seen an incredible change in the boys. All they needed was some caring adults and the opportunities to contribute, excel and develop. I cannot do anything to help these boys in terms of their daily development, but what I have committed to over the past 6 years or so is helping them simply to understand that there are people out there who care about them. Some of those people are in far off lands such as school students in Scotland or Torbay. Some of those people come and stay with us.

Slide 8

People and Volunteers

1 minute 30 seconds

Apart from Alcides' overall co-ordination, we have three 'paid' helpers for Azul Wasi, Adrian and Isobel are married and live close by with their family. Isobel helps with cooking and horticultural tasks. Adrian works on construction and maintenance. Carlos is the third member and is an 'all rounder'. Between the four of them they help the boys run their home and organise their lives.

Throughout the history of Project Colibri and from the start of the build of Azul Wasi, the boys have been used to being visited by volunteers. There is always work to be done in construction, maintenance, schooling, horticulture and animal husbandry. We have visits from individuals on GAP years, school groups from the UK working their social programme component of expeditions to Peru. We've had engineers, marines (they built our wonderful wooden goal posts and tyre swings), university students and mature people leading a proactive 3rd age. Our beautiful murals were painted by students from secondary schools in Taunton and from Dundee University. Others have built our bread oven and the latest build is a large poly tunnel.

Having contact with so many wonderfully positive people is a good thing for these boys. Although like with their contact with me this can only be a temporary thing, one of the factors missing in many of these boys lives are positive adult role models close to them. These boys have a lot of catching up to do.

Slide 9

Support through GlobalEd

1 minute

GlobalEd exists to enable people to learn about life in Peru and life in the UK. That process is an educational one. A consequence of that mutual learning is the development of relationships and support. Support for the former Project Colibri and now Azul Wasi has been virtually down to the initiatives that have developed in and around Dundee in Scotland.

The knock on effect of regular salsa dances and classes over the past 6 years have brought what life in the Andes is like to many. Work with the schools for example has been a tremendous pleasure for me and their support of the boy's educational costs (aprox. US\$ 150 per head per year) has kept the boys in school for the past 4 years.

With the success of the educational programme in Scotland GlobalEd has been able to extend its influence into Torbay and Taunton, building the relationships between schools that are now starting to see the benefits themselves.

Slide 10 Animals 1 minute

Animal husbandry has always been a key component of life at the home. This is an agricultural region so related skills are always useful. Not only that there are the food products, milk, eggs, meat. A cow named 'Sara' (the word for maize in Quechua), sheep, a donkey, ducks and hens, 'guard' dog called Hercules and a parrot.

The boys take care of the animals and although this is a shared responsibility, there are some that are taking it upon themselves to take more responsibility. Once we can get the buildings, we would like to be rearing guinea pig and rabbit too. Our land is half a hectare so we are limited by the amount of animals we can effectively keep.

Slide 11 School 1 minute 30 seconds

The boys have been enrolled at the local schools in Oropesa since the beginning of the new school year in March 2008. There is a primary and secondary school on a large shared site in town. Close by is the nursery school where our youngest, Danny, attends and has charmed his teachers already.

The boys are happy to be at school and are making friends quickly. It's good to see the boys off in the afternoon to meet up with a friend or be involved in a job such as painting the school. The boys have space at Azul Wasi for their home work which often taxes the withering brains and memories of those adults unlucky enough to be present.

We have already started talking with Heads and staff from the schools about how they could perhaps be involved in the wider GlobalEd programme of educational development. We have already identified two areas of need. Firstly an afternoon or evening school is required so that all 'working' children have a realistic chance of an education. Secondly, English language in the schools is not that well taught. A Programme of Studies and support from UK Language Undergraduates (rather like language assistants we have in UK secondaries) is one option we will be investigating.

Slide 12 Needs 1 minute 30 seconds

There they are.

The bottom line is that we need to at least treble our budget (from an average of US\$ 1 000 per month over the past 6 years) and preferably secure an income on a monthly basis allowing us to pay wages and vital costs with ease. As Project Colibri we had none of the human resource cost or had to pay for the construction of the home itself.

We had our basics from the support that we receive from Scotland and beyond. Now the story is a very different one. Week by week, year by year we are going to have to raise serious cash. Our objective is to become economically sustainable with products and services produced by Azul Wasi but we are still at an early stage of our development.

My role with Azul Wasi has to change somewhat now. Instead of being a passive educator, supporting the developing relationships and letting mutual support organically transpire, now I will have to take on a much more formal approach to promotion of Azul Wasi here in the UK.

Slide 13 Thank you 1 minute

May I finally thank you on behalf of the boys and team for your interest and time in the activities of Azul Wasi. The home has a bright future because of the people involved. We have built it from nothing, we have barely enough to scrape by. What Azul Wasi does have is good hearted local people and a bunch of boys that are like coiled springs just ready to get on with a proper life. That's what is important, the people. I know that the people already associated with Azul Wasi are proud to be part of the 'family'.

Thank you