



# Fabricio's story

A profile from  
Young Lives in Peru

*“When it hails, I get scared. ... It ruins the crops  
and spoils the produce. ... When it is time for  
harvest, there isn't any.”*

# Fabricio's story

**Fabricio is now 9 years old and has grown up a lot. He still lives on the family farm, and was interviewed twice, once while he was looking after the family's two cows, and once at home. He still enjoys school and playing with his dogs but worries about his parents' health and about climate change.**

Fabricio is the youngest of six children. His older brother is 24 and sometimes sends money home. His oldest sister is 22 and married and lives and works in Lima. His other sisters are away at secondary school so he lives alone with his parents. But he says he doesn't mind because his siblings come home at the weekends and bring him sweets.

Fabricio is an affectionate boy. He was happy to do the interview although sometimes he became sad when talking about his father's health and the effects of climate change on the people in his village.

Since we last visited, Fabricio says that his best moments have been with his sister and his parents, from whom he has learned about household activities and farming. He helps to graze the cows, collects food for the guinea pigs, and helps in the kitchen. He is proud that he has learned to cook and wash his own clothes. He sometimes earns a little money harvesting potatoes for his uncle. He gives the money to his mother. On Sundays he goes shopping with her in the local town.

"What does your mother do in town?

*She buys produce, vegetables and fruit. She buys everything.*

Do you like going to town?

*Yes.*

Would you like to stay there?

*No."*

He says he prefers to study, and lists what he has learned at school – maths, reading and writing. He likes school a lot, especially learning how to multiply and divide. He says that if he does not finish his work, he is punished by the teacher.

He thinks that if he studies hard he can go to university; otherwise he will have to stay in the village to work on the farm. His mother says she wants her children to be professionals, and education is the best way to achieve this. His older brother is studying business administration.

Fabricio was only 5 years old when we last interviewed him. He comes from an indigenous Quechua-speaking family. He had recently started primary school and liked it a lot. He spent a lot of time playing on his own because his siblings were at school in another place. Sometimes he helped his mother by collecting firewood and feeding the guinea pigs. He said he loved animals, especially their cow Francisca.

Fabricio loves animals. Last time Young Lives visited, he was very proud of his cow, Francisca. He is sad because she became ill.

“What happened to your cow?

*Her tummy became swollen.*

And then what happened?

*She had a tummy ache and later we sold her to my uncle.*

Did you care a lot about her?

*Yes”*

But now, he says, he has two dogs instead. He plays with them a lot, more than with other children.

*“I play ball with my dogs. They really like playing with the ball.*

What are they called?

*Sharu and Chens.”*

Fabricio tells us that he does not like the rain and cold weather. It stops children going to school and spoils the crops. This makes him sad because people suffer and go hungry. Many people have respiratory diseases.

“What do people do when it hails?

*They are sad.*

And what do you do when there's a hailstorm?

*When it hails, I get scared. It hurts. It ruins the crops and spoils the produce.*

And what happens then?

*When it is time for harvest, there isn't any.”*

Fabricio also worries about his father's health. He tells of an occasion when the rains prevented his father from coming home on time and he thought he had been in an accident. He says that his father has back pain because he works so hard. He remembers when his older brother took his father to the nearest town to be treated.

“Were you worried when your father was ill? What did you think?

*That he was going to die.*

And what did your mother do when your father became ill?

*She cried and bought remedies; she bought pills from the clinic.*

But he got better?

*Yes.”*

In fact, neither of his parents is very healthy. His father was ill three times with bronchial pneumonia and his mother suffers from gallbladder disease. This has also had an effect on the family's income. His mother says that one of his sisters has mental health problems and has been to a doctor and a healer.

On a more positive note, Fabricio says since we last visited there have been some good changes in his home because his family joined the Government's *Juntos* programme, which

helps poor families provide education and basic care for their children. The main change he has noticed is that the house is much cleaner – which he said was one of the requirements of the programme.<sup>1</sup> The family also bought some tables for the house which, he says, allows him more space for doing his homework.

He says he would like to study in town when he is older but he is afraid of cars.

“Why do you want to go to the town?”

*It’s good to study, but I’m frightened by the traffic. There are many cars in the city. But here there are only a few.”*

It is not until later that Fabricio’s mother tells us that her oldest son died in a car accident in Lima.

### The Peruvian Government’s *Juntos* programme

Almost a third of Peru’s people still live in poverty, and several studies have shown that children are more likely to be poor than adults. The Government has introduced a number of programmes to try and improve the situation. One of the largest, reaching almost half a million people, is *Juntos* (which means ‘Together’ in Spanish).

*Juntos* aims to stop poverty being handed down through the generations. It is what is known as a ‘conditional cash transfer’ programme, which gives money to poor families each month if they agree to certain conditions. *Juntos* is aimed at families like Fabricio’s, who live in rural areas and are both poor and indigenous. The conditions are:

- Parents must send their children to school and make sure they attend at least 85 per cent of classes.
- Parents must ensure children get all their vaccinations and take them for regular health check-ups.
- Pregnant women must have medical care before and after the birth of their baby.
- All adults must have national identification cards and they must make sure that their children are registered at birth.

*“I play ball with my dogs. They really like playing with the ball.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Keeping the house clean is not one of the requirements, but sometimes the *Juntos* supervisors add additional requirements.

### The Peruvian Government's *Juntos* programme *continued*

The money is usually given to mothers, in order to improve their bargaining power within the household by reducing their economic dependence. But if they do not fulfil all the conditions, the payment can be suspended. Every three months, local coordinators visit the families, and cross-check the information they get with records of school attendance and healthcare visits.

Twenty-seven per cent of Young Lives families with younger children knew about *Juntos*. It provides these families with around 30 per cent of their monthly income. Although only 57 per cent of families knew about *Juntos*, this was higher among mothers with low levels of education.

Around 60 per cent of Young Lives families in *Juntos* say that the programme is 'good' or 'very good'. Some mothers say the monitoring is oppressive: "*Juntos* is everywhere. We need to be careful and do what they say, otherwise we lose the money." They are also worried about whether the programme will last long enough to help them in the future. And some children make comments about others who aren't in the programme, for example: "he hasn't had his vaccinations", "she never has pencils and rubbers", "he looks untidy and dirty all the time", leading to divisions between families in the programme and those who aren't.

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**Sources:** Natalia Streuli (2012) 'Child Protection: A Role for Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes?' *Development in Practice* 22.4; Santiago Cueto et al. (2012) *Tracking Disparities: Who Gets Left Behind? Initial Findings from Peru*, Young Lives Round 3 Survey Report.

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## Country context: Peru

Peru is now considered a 'high human development' country, rich in natural resources. It currently ranks 80 out of 187 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index. It has a population of 29.4 million people. For the last decade, the economy has been growing at over 5 per cent each year. Even during 2009, when most of the world economy stagnated or deteriorated, growth continued in Peru, although at a lower rate.

But the country's strong economic performance has not been matched in terms of poverty reduction. There are widening gaps between different sectors of the population (especially between Spanish-speaking and indigenous populations and between people living in urban and rural areas). Social expenditure is low, although there are a number of government programmes targeted at the poor.

- The overall poverty rate decreased by 17 per cent between 2004 and 2010, but a third of the population still lives in poverty.
- While 19 per cent of people in towns are poor, this rises to 51 per cent of people in rural areas.
- Migration from rural to urban areas is common. About 30 per cent of the population lives in the capital city, Lima, and 55 per cent lives on the narrow coastline (including Lima).
- Levels of poverty, infant mortality, maternal mortality and malnourishment among indigenous groups are twice as high as national averages.

### Children

- Of the 3.8 million Peruvians living in extreme poverty, 2.1 million are children.
- Children in the poorest areas – city slums, the Andean Highlands and the Amazon rainforest – are ten times more likely to die before the age of 5 than the children from the richest 20 per cent of families.
- Almost all children now go to primary school. Enrolment in secondary school is low compared to primary, but it is growing.
- But repetition of grades and temporary drop-out from school are common, leading to a high percentage of children who are 'over-age', or older than the norm for the grade they are in.
- The number of children who work is high. Boys are more likely to be employed in paid activities and girls more likely to work in the home.

**Sources:** [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk); UNDP (2011) *Human Development Report*; Santiago Cueto et al. (2012) *Tracking Disparities: Who Gets Left Behind? Initial Findings from Peru*, Young Lives Round 3 Survey Report.

Young Lives is a unique international study investigating the changing nature of childhood poverty in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam. By following the lives of 12,000 children and young people over 15 years, we aim to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty and provide evidence to support effective policies for children.

The profile presented here is one of 24 taken from the interviews we did with the children individually and in groups. Each one is accompanied by a theme of some kind that emerged from the material and which illustrates the issues that children are having to contend with, but also gives a sense of the wider context of their lives. These range from education and schooling, to inequality, health and illness, violence in school and at home, early marriage, the effects of migration, families' experiences of crises, government schemes to help poor people, and children's views and experiences of what it is to be rich or poor.

The children and their families who are participating in the Young Lives study willingly share with us a great deal of detailed personal information about their daily lives, and we have a responsibility to protect their confidentiality and ensure their identities remain protected. For this reason, the children's names have been changed here. The accompanying photos are of children in similar situations to the children within our study sample.

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**Young Lives**   
An International Study of Childhood Poverty