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Los Vicos: A Profile of a Peace Corps Initiative in the Peruvian Andes
In the early morning of October 14, 1960, John F. Kennedy issued a challenge. Before an audience of over 10,000 students at the University of Michigan, he asked how many would be willing to serve their country and the cause of peace by living and working in the developing world. The results were stark and swift and by March of 1961 the Peace Corps was founded.

Almost from its onset, the Peace Corps came under fire as critics questioned its usefulness and practicality. Proponents argued that it served both humanitarian and diplomatic interests abroad, while those against it took the position that the Peace Corps was a waste of tax payers money, and merely an appendage of United States intelligence agencies and the diplomatic corps.

While both of these viewpoints have legitimate voice in the proper contexts, there is no denying that the Peace Corps, since its establishment, has had some impact. This includes how America is perceived abroad, especially in the Third World. Also, with over 150,000 Americans having served as Volunteers, these people have influenced how Americans perceive themselves in a broader multi-cultural context at home.¹

Since its inception the Peace Corps has had its share of triumphs and failures. Throughout its brief history, a common theme within the Peace Corps has been the amount of latitude that it has granted Volunteers to pursue whatever it is that they desire. Author, Paul Theroux, writing for the *New York Times* said this:

*I still do not understand who was running the show, or what they did or even what the Peace Corps actually was, apart from an enlightened excuse for sending us to poor countries. Those countries are still poor. We were the ones who were
enriched, and sometimes I think that we reminded those people -- as if they needed such a thing -- that they were being left out. We stayed a while, and then we left them. And yet I think I would do it again. At an uncertain time in my life I joined. And up to a point -- they gave me a lot of rope -- the Peace Corps allowed me to be myself. I realized that it was much better to be neglected than manipulated, and I had learned that you make your own life.²

This “rope” has led to a general consensus that while the Peace Corps has been extremely beneficial to Peace Corps Volunteers (hereafter, PCVs), it has provided much less benefit to those whom it was designed to serve. Dave Johnson, a former volunteer in Paraguay provides further insight:

Almost any returned volunteer, if you talk to them long enough, will say that "I got more out of the experience than I gave". I say that too and, at least in my case, it's true. It's not something I'm proud of but, then again, I don't really feel that guilty about it. It's true in my case not because I got so much but that I gave so little. It wasn't that I was unwilling to give more or that I had little to give. I had a lot more to give than the people I worked with were willing or possibly able to accept. I suppose that a lot of that was my fault but, god dammit, they bear some responsibility as well.³

This latitude afforded Volunteers has resulted in rather mixed success of Peace Corps operations worldwide. Although it is undeniable that the Peace Corps has had its share of triumphs, it has also had some glaring examples of failure. Perhaps the most evident of these examples is that of Los Vicos, Peru.

Located in the Andean Highlands in the region known as the Callejón de Huaylas, Vicos is a perfect case study for several reasons. First and foremost, it was an area that was among the least developed in Peru. Cornell University in conjunction with the Peruvian Plan Nacional de Integración de la Población Aborigen (hereafter, PNIPA), had for several years prior to the insertion of PCVs,
maintained Peruvian staff on site at Vicos as part of their applied sociological/anthropological experiment called the Cornell Peru Project. This project is perhaps the best known of its kind in the world, and it won international recognition because of its success at guiding Vicos in the critical transition from feudal hacienda to autonomous community. In this respect, Vicos was not unique in Peru, as much of the country underwent similar land tenure reforms over the next few years. Vicos’ uniqueness is derived from the conscious and scientific approaches that were introduced and reported by researchers. Part of this process was the implementation of Peace Corps operations in Vicos and the surrounding highlands, and the subsequent documentation and reporting on events that transpired by the Cornell Peru Project. This study by Cornell on Peace Corps operations in the Peruvian Sierra was jointly funded by Cornell and the Peace Corps/Washington, and the data collected was later published by the department of anthropology at Cornell. This documentation provides the necessary evidence for an adequate analysis of Vicos and of Peace Corps operations within the region.

The second reason Vicos is perfect for a case study resides in the fact that the PCVs that were sent to Vicos were expelled by the Vicosinos. This occurred for several reasons that will be discussed within the context of this paper. The example that Vicos provides is a valuable tool for educating those that serve in the “Third World”. Both the Peace Corps and the community of Vicos as an autonomous entity, were in their infancy at the time of the expulsion, but this only partially explains the impetus behind the expulsion and subsequent return of the
Peace Corps to the community. By analyzing what went wrong and why, it is possible to avoid past mistakes, improve future Peace Corps operations, and perhaps avoid such harsh and humiliating reprimands.

**Chancos: A Vicosino Paradox**

In 1962 Chancos was a run-down property owned by the Public Charity Society of Huarez. It was an absentee owned, publicly held manor with Indian serfs tied to its lands. These serfs numbered sixty-three individuals constituting fifteen families in all. Culturally, the Chancos serfs were inextricably linked to the former serfs of Vicos, related to them by family ties and cultural kinship. Prior to 1933, Vicos and Chancos had been a single manor and it wasn’t until the Public Charity Society began to lease them separately that this division between the two occurred. The primary reason for this separation was due to the differences in economic activity between the two. Vicos was agriculturally based, and depended on row crops and livestock to sustain the community. Chancos’ economy however, was based upon the revenue of a small hotel and thermal baths designed to serve the scattered tourists that happen to wander through the area. The serfs at the Chancos site did not work on location as traditionally serfs had done, instead the “patron” had them building houses in the city of Huaraz. Much animosity existed between the Cornell/PNIPA staff and the leaseholder of Chancos. In fact, the leaseholder went so far as to assert that he would one day store his potato crop in the then new public school building erected by the Cornell Peru Project and the Vicosinos.
When the Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to Vicos arrived in October of 1962, they had to pass through Chancos, which lies on the only road between Marcara and its terminus at the Vicos public square. Each time the PCVs went to Huarez to shop, or to Marcara for their mail, etc., they had to travel through Chancos. It was constantly on their conscience and therefore presented an implicit challenge.

**Vicos: A Society in Transition**

In 1951 when Cornell staff first arrived at Vicos, the community ranked near the very bottom of the Cornell development scale in terms of complexity and integration into Peruvian national life. The vast majority of the then-serfs of the Vicos manor did not even recognize the word "Peru," and had no knowledge of their Peruvian nationality. They did not even recognize the name of the then-president of the republic. The social structure of the manor had effectively cut these Indian serfs and their ancestors off from all but a very narrow range of contact with persons outside the boundaries of the manor.

The Vicos population in 1951 consisted of farmers with very low technological skills. They were so inefficient that the population could barely sustain itself from the produce of its subsistence plots with supplementation by extensive daily wage labor in the town of Marcara and other rural properties in the area.

In terms of services, in 1951 Vicos offered only the most basic ones found in virtually all Andean rural settlements: a Roman Catholic chapel for holding
occasional church services, a cemetery for burying its dead, and an irrigation canal system dating from prehistoric times. One of the manor lease-holders had put the Indian serfs to work opening a road several years earlier, so a bumpy truck track reached to the manor house and chapel alongside an unimproved public square near the lower edge of the property, six kilometers uphill from Marcara. A few Indian farmers attempted to augment their scanty income by selling coca leaves, alcohol, and a few other widely used commodities from their homes.

Although freed from the duties of serfdom by the Peruvian government along with the help of Cornell University, the traditional lifestyle of the Vicosinos had not significantly changed by the time the Peace Corps entered the scene at Vicos. Though the Peruvian government, along with the Cornell project, had made strides by building a school and some buildings, the government and university staff simply lacked the necessary expertise and resources to carry out widespread reforms in the Indian dominated highlands, including Vicos. The Vicosinos had, however, made strides towards modernization. In 1961, before the arrival of the Peace Corps, the Vicosinos had managed to purchase their lands and bought a heavy duty Ford truck to ship their produce to market in Lima. Therefore, by 1962, when the first wave of Peace Corps Volunteers entered into the Callejón de Huaylas and Vicos, they found a rather undeveloped society, but one that had managed to establish the basic infrastructures of society.

The Volunteers represented a diverse ensemble of the different walks of life to be found in the United States. However, there was one common denominator
uniting all the PCVs; the amount of education each had received. All of the Volunteers had at least a bachelors degree and one had a masters.\textsuperscript{14} Taken in the context of that time, these people represented part of the educated class in the United States. These Volunteers entered the community of Vicos and a political and social climate far removed from their own. Not only did they have to make the adjustment to life in Vicos and develop relationships with the indigenous population, they also found themselves smack in the middle of existing relationships between PNIPA staff, Peruvian schoolteachers, and the Cornell Field Research Director and his wife. The relationships between those already onsite had not always been harmonious through the years, and disagreements existed between the various staff members located at Vicos. It was not long before the PCVs found themselves tangled in a dangerous web and for various reasons were unable to extricate themselves before it was too late. The first of these problems was the language barrier.

It would generally be assumed that the PCVs would have fluency in the Spanish language, but that was not the case at all. In fact, only one-fifth of the Volunteers were totally fluent in Spanish. Nearly three-fifths were very proficient in the language, and one fifth had very poor Spanish skills and were only able to communicate in a rudimentary manner with phrases and gestures along with English.\textsuperscript{15} This lack of language ability caused problems for the PCVs and their ability to relate to their Peruvian counterparts that were either staff for the Cornell Peru Project or for PNIPA. However, it was not the lack of proficiency in Spanish
so much, as it was the lack of Quechuan language skills that disadvantaged the PCVs. Quechua is the native language of the Vicosinos.\textsuperscript{16}

The second of the reasons PCVs found themselves at such odds with both the Vicosinos as well as the Cornell/PNIPA staff is the result of status and prestige. With the arrival of the Peace Corps into the Callejón de Huaylas, the indigenous population for the first time came into contact with members of American society on a "large" scale. Although Cornell employees had been on-site for some time, the majority of the staff had always been mestizos, hailing from Peru's urban centers along the coast.\textsuperscript{17} This novelty worked both for and against the Volunteers. Though originally curious about the "gringos" in their community, Vicosinos soon doubted the honorable intentions of the PCVs and drew comparisons between them and the upper class urban elite that dominated the political and social framework of Peru. It was perfectly normal for Vicosinos to make the assumption that "gringos" fit traditional societal roles in their country. Due to the limited experience of Vicosinos with outside societies, it was only natural that suspicions would arise over the PCVs and what their "role" was going to be in the recently liberated Vicosino society.

Closely related to the problem of status and prestige encountered by the PCVs was that of class conflict between the Volunteers, their mestizo counterparts, and the Vicosinos. Like most Latin American nations, there is a very strong system of racial and cultural identity markers, that although somewhat diluted now, were historically very important in establishing ones social class.
These cultural identifiers coupled with language ability played an extremely important role and they are key in understanding the relationships between both the PCVs and the Vicosinos, as well as the mestizo members of the Cornell/PNIPA team. Traditionally, it has been the mestizo that has held power in the Peruvian Sierra. The mestizo speaks Spanish as his/her first language and usually speaks a native language as well. Generally mestizos are able to take advantage of services offered by the government, and in turn control the political, social, and economic life of the region.\textsuperscript{18}

The Indian, by contrast, is principally Quechua speaking and lacks education. As a result he/she is unable to participate in national life or take advantage of the programs available to him/her. Most often, Indians are a source of cheap wage labor, or as in the past, they were serfs on manors. As a result, Indians were and continue to be excluded from positions of power, be they political, economic, or social in nature.\textsuperscript{19} The PCV threatened to alter this class relationship and as a result mestizos expressed animosity towards the PCVs for the disruption of traditional societal roles within the Peruvian Sierra social fabric.

The most significant component in the disharmony between the PCVs and the mestizos and Vicosinos had to do with a lack of patience coupled with excessive pride by the Volunteers. There was an overwhelming lack of tact, diplomacy, and persistence on the behalf of the PCVs in their relationships to both the Vicosinos as well as the Cornell/PNIPA staff. This is quite evident in the “incidents” between PCVs and both the mestizo staff and the Vicosinos. The
PCV’s three mentioned character flaws are largely responsible for the fall from grace of all Peace Corps operations that took place in Vicos, and ultimately resulted in the expulsion of the Volunteers from Vicos.

Though the themes of culture and interpersonal relations provide a general outline of what went wrong and the conditions that existed at the time of the arrival of the PCVs, it does not provide sufficient evidence as to why the actual expulsion occurred. To gain that understanding, it is imperative that to make a closer examination of what actually occurred “on the ground” at Vicos and how the individual Volunteers themselves shaped their future. These events were ultimately what led to the demise of the Peace Corps in Vicos.

In October of 1962, thirteen PCVs arrived in Vicos and started Peace Corps operations in the area.\textsuperscript{20} Of this total, this paper will closely exam the actions of only three of the Volunteers: Allan, Adam, and Anita.*

The Volunteers sent to Vicos brought with them very modern equipment by local standards, for their work on the former manor. They had the use of two vehicles, a jeep and a six-passenger International pickup truck, both of which were new.\textsuperscript{21} The Volunteers were relatively comfortably housed. They lived initially in two buildings, both of which were also used as the living quarters by the Peruvian staff of schoolteachers and PNIPA personnel. The PCVs, like their Peruvian counterparts, paid no rent for the use of these buildings.\textsuperscript{22}

* All names of PCVs are fictitious in order to protect their identities
At the time the Volunteers arrived, the Peruvian staff members were eating their meals at a pension located in the complex of community buildings. The Volunteers did not find this arrangement to their liking, however, and after a short period of experimentation, they established an efficient, and for them inexpensive, cooperative "diner." The Peruvian staff members felt that the Peace Corps Volunteers were thus showing off their superiority and wealth, even though several of them could have afforded to pay an amount equal to that invested in food by the Volunteers. The Volunteers refused to eat at the boarding house where the Peruvian teachers ate. Consequently, the Volunteers always took their meals together, the women cooking and the men washing dishes, at least in theory. The system endured until the last four to five months of the term of volunteer service in the Peru. Then, the women refused to continue cooking, because the men were not only complaining about the food served, but refusing to wash dishes. Two of the Volunteers, Alma and Annabelle, had become virtual housekeepers for the others, and spent most of their time at this job until they eventually rebelled.

This self-isolation by the Volunteers from there Peruvian counterparts was a sign of things to come. Relationships between the Volunteers and the Peruvian staff got off to a poor start, and remained that way through much of the time Volunteers stayed in Vicos. Conflict with the Peruvian teachers began simply, with small incidents, such as the Peace Corps Volunteers not liking the way the teachers played basketball, and vice versa. After several rather strong arguments, the Peace Corps Volunteers and the Peruvian teachers kept largely to themselves,
despite the physical juxtaposition of their living quarters and work areas.

Eventually, this volunteer isolationism within the small enclave of outsiders living and working at Vicos was symbolized by the sign "The Vicos Hilton" hanging over the patio entrance to the Peace Corps volunteer cooking and dining area. Apparently meant to be ironic by the Volunteers, to whom the rustic facilities were distinctly crude, the sign denoted relative luxury in this bottom-of-the-social-scale-post in the eyes of their Peruvian counterparts who had never experienced life in an affluent society. As a result, the Peruvian staff developed a strong animosity toward the Volunteers. This was unfortunate for the Volunteers because the Peruvians had been on-site for a much longer period of time and had gained the Vicosinos' trust. Secondly, many of them spoke fluent Quechua, the native tongue of the Vicosinos. It was exactly the Peruvian's influence and ability to speak the native language that played such an instrumental part on the expulsion of the Peace Corps Volunteers by the community.

Allan, Adam, and Anita

Allan: The Disheartened Leader

Allan, along with Alfred, was a volunteer leader at the Vicos project. His examples provide some insight on the successes and failures of the Peace Corps Volunteers in Vicos. As one of the nine Volunteers actually attempting to work in the town Vicos itself, Allan undertook to promote improved livestock handling practices. He sought to encourage vaccination of stock against various diseases,
and helped to protect the Vicos animals against a hoof-and-mouth disease episode in the early months of 1963. He also encouraged Vicos animal owners to deworm their animals. His success at getting the Vicosinos to cooperate in this undertaking was not great, and quickly led to discouragement. In addition to his major campaign of animal immunization against the nationwide hoof-and-mouth disease epidemic, Allan demonstrated the vaccination of hogs against cholera, and the vaccination of chickens.

Despite his efforts to launch animal husbandry programs with the people of Vicos, none of these resulted in immediate implementation of modern techniques. Allan then encountered a series of difficulties, which led him further into a state of depression and internal conflict.

He attempted, for example, to assist a close Vicosino friend in castrating a friend's father's valuable donkey stud. Using a method he called "the American style," Allan castrated the animal, and it promptly died of hemorrhaging. The boy's father was furious, and Allan promised either to reimburse him for half the value of the animal, or to buy a new, young donkey replacement. He left on a vacation shortly thereafter, and upon returning did not keep his promise. The father punished his son for allowing such a loss of a valuable animal to occur, and the boy (the only son in the family) ran away to the coast and never returned.

Allan also took it up on himself to care for two Peace Corps horses at Vicos. This occupied much of his time. They became the best-groomed and best-fed animals in the valley. He constructed a corral for these mounts behind the
teachers' dormitory, a move not appreciated by the Peruvian teachers. Without asking their permission, he also used as his tack room, a room in the building that had been destined by the teachers as their "club and game room."31 This also rankled the teachers. When they managed to collect sufficient money to equip their projected club, they threw all the Peace Corps horse gear out onto the patio while the Volunteers slept one night and set up their own equipment. Then they placed a sign on the door of the room for the first time, denoting that it was theirs.32

This act precipitated a crisis in the relationships between the Peace Corps Volunteers, who rallied behind Allan, and the teachers who were backed by the PNIPA staff. When the Peruvian teachers invited the Peace Corps Volunteers to attend the inauguration party, and invited Alfred to act as godfather to the installation (a well-used device for levying a "contribution" tax upon well-to-do individuals in Peru), the incident passed off with no surface difficulty.33 However, the incident engendered mutual hard feelings that lasted until the Volunteers involved departed.

After heavy losses of unvaccinated livestock occurred in 1963, while mortality in vaccinated herds remained low, Vicos stockmen generally accepted the vaccination technique, and protected their surviving animals against hoof-and-mouth disease. Thus, the innovations that Allan offered in 1962-1963 were accepted promptly by a few Indian stockmen. When hoof-and-mouth disease dramatically demonstrated the efficacy of protective vaccination, this innovation
was rapidly accepted by other livestock owners.\textsuperscript{34} Though this success took place after Allan had transferred out to the village of Mita.

Allan also attempted to conduct an automobile driving and mechanics class for a group of young Vicosinos who were interested in acquiring these skills under the stimulus of the community’s acquisition of a new truck. He held the classes sporadically for several months, using the ancient but functional jeep belonging to the Cornell Peru Project. He abandoned this program when he transferred out of Vicos and Alfred replaced him as instructor.\textsuperscript{35}

Along with his self-assigned class of automobile driving and mechanics class, Allan also was charged with maintaining the two Peace Corps vehicles at Vicos. Due to a combination of bad roads, hard and frequent driving, heavy loads, these two vehicles soon developed serious troubles.\textsuperscript{36} Many drivers also exhibited a general carelessness with the equipment. A prime example of this is when the front bumper on the International pickup was lost when it fell off, and the Peace Corps volunteer driving at the time simply did not stop to pick it up.\textsuperscript{37} The problem of vehicle maintenance, both the acquisition of parts and the constant need of repairs, was so enormous that Allan was apparently overwhelmed, and he abdicated this responsibility.

This however is not the end of Allan’s woes. He had the misfortune, moreover, to knock down a pedestrian with a vehicle in Huaraz. Attempting to "arrange" the consequences of this accident himself, he told no one at Vicos or in the Peace Corps about the incident until word eventually spread around, and the
members of the national police force stationed in Huaraz threatened to impound the vehicle until the injured man was indemnified.38

As a result of this series of personal frustrations and incidents, Allan's relations with his co-leader, Alfred, deteriorated. They had never been good to begin with, primarily, as a result of Alfred's greater popularity with the other Volunteers. Eventually, Allan became insecure personally, and socially isolated from his peers. Finally, Allan requested to be transferred to the community of Mita, where he achieved a measurable impact on that society, which he was unable to do at Vicos.39

**Adam: The Typical Vicos Volunteer**

Adam, along with Allan, epitomizes the lack of persistence and desire to see projects through to their completion. Adam undertook to work on row crop improvement in Vicos. He started out enthusiastically, supporting the agronomist assigned to Vicos as well as surrounding areas. After satisfying his curiosity however, Adam refused to supervise community plantings, claiming that these were too simplistic in nature. He then took on several activities that he himself had suggested and began work on those.40

During the early months of 1963, Adam experimented with using the local ponies as draft animals.41 Traditionally, oxen had been used for plowing and pulling carts, but Adam felt that the local ponies could do the job more than adequately. Adam also wanted to employ the use of a steel plow for use by these animals. After securing the special harnesses from the United States with the help
of the Peace Corps, he began to train the horses. After some four weeks, he abandoned the project when a horse he was trying to train shied away and ran off with the wooden platform and plow flailing behind it, endangering everyone in its path. After this incident, he fed the animal barley and alfalfa for a month and then returned it to the communal pasture. The harness, plow, and platform were abandoned and left to the mercy of the elements.

There was a heavy demand for timber in Vicos. Eucalyptus was seen as the ideal tree as it is fast growing and can provide plentiful fuel in a timber deficient area. The local agronomist assigned to Vicos, along with Adam decided that an intensive forestation program was in order for the region. Seedbeds were prepared in the communal garden/orchard and left in Adam's care. For three weeks he took care of them and then tired of his responsibility and went off on vacation. When he returned, he found that over 10,000 seedlings had died due to lack of irrigation. This effectively postponed any attempts at forestation for another year.

Another project Adam suggested was the installation of hot showers for use by schoolteachers and students in Vicos. He drew up a plan and a budget. The Vicosinos Community Council purchased the necessary lumber and bricks, while the Cornell Peru Project furnished the 20 sacks of concrete needed for making the floors and foundation. The beneficiaries volunteered their labor for the project and with Adam worked on the structure for two weeks. At this point, Adam tired of the task and abandoned the project. None of the potential beneficiaries took up the task and saw it through to completion. As a result, the lumber warped, the
concrete turned to stone, and the tools belonging to the Peace Corps and the Cornell Peru Project disappeared.\textsuperscript{47}

While in college, Adam was a competent musician who earned money by leading his own band.\textsuperscript{48} The people of Vicos were steeped in a culture of traditional music, but as the society emerged, people had taken a strong liking for the brass band music played at the festivals in the region. There were a number of young Vicosino men that wished to learn how to play these instruments and upon learning of this, Adam encouraged them to purchase instruments, under the guise that he would instruct them in their playing. Several young men did indeed buy instruments, which represented a significant cash outlay for rural Peruvian Indians. Adam reneged on his promise to teach these boys when he learned that they were only interested in learning how to play the traditional “huayno” music of the region, which he disliked. As a result, music classes were not held.\textsuperscript{49} However, the Vicosino boys were wholeheartedly interested in learning how to play these European style instruments and so they paid 50 soles a piece to hire a music master from the village near Huarez to come to Vicos and teach them how to play.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, the impetus behind the formation of the Vicos Band originally came from Adam, but the realization of the band came from the Indians themselves and their own hired instructor.

When Allan left Vicos for Mita, Adam took over his class in driving and automobile mechanics and maintenance. This class used an old but functional universal jeep belonging to the Cornell Peru Project as a demonstration vehicle. In
two weeks of instruction, Adam managed to make the jeep nonfunctional. He then dismantled it with the announced intention of repairing it, but never did so. The jeep parts were left scattered around the yard and under the roof where it had been kept. Ultimately, the Cornell Peru Project field director had to sell the remaining parts, wheels, tires, and vehicle registration (the most valuable remnant) for what they would bring.51

The example of Allan and Adam, clearly shows some of the successes and failure of the Peace Corps in Vicos and why. Although Allan had good intentions, sometimes he was a bit rash in his decisions concerning projects. It seems as if Allan lacked the necessary dedication to stick with a project until completion, and that he had a tendency to get frustrated easily. As a result, he was relatively unsuccessful in his endeavors in Vicos. The example of animal vaccinations falls into this category perfectly. If Allan had stuck with the program and waited until his program met with success, he would have obtained the self-fulfillment that he desired and created a more meaningful, lasting impact on the livestock men of Vicos. Although his work validated itself later on after the hoof-mouth epidemic, Allan was not around to take advantage of the demand for his services that disaster had wrought. If the vaccination program shows his belated successes, his treatment of the donkey situation, the automotive repairs, and the lack of amiability and respect towards his Peruvian counterparts, clearly show his failures.

Adam further demonstrates this lack of commitment towards projects, perhaps even more so than Allan. Due to his lack of commitment, Adam cost the
Peace Corps more money than any other volunteer in Vicos. Furthermore, his nonchalance left a very bad impression on the Vicosinos. His lack of commitment and pride in workmanship stuck with the Vicosinos. This issue would come to haunt the PCVs when the Vicosinos debated whether to expel the Peace Corps or not.

Although this paper uses Allan and Adam as examples, they were neither alone, nor were there problems unique to the Volunteers living in Vicos. These types of occurrences happened repeatedly throughout the tenure of the Peace Corps in Vicos. Other failures were a proposed credit union, medical center, forestry project, hotel, and thermal baths. Each of these projects was started, but either due to the lack of dedication by the Volunteers, or lack of respect and communication among both the Volunteers and the Peruvian mestizos and/or the Volunteers and the Vicosinos, all these projects ended in utter failure.

**Anita: The Peace Corps Redeemed**

This study has presented a rather dismal picture of the Peace Corps, its personnel, and its activities in Vicos, but not all was bad. One person more than any other provided the context for further Peace Corps involvement in Vicos, and it was due to her good relations among the Vicosinos that she was able to make a lasting impact in the region and among its peoples.

The efforts of Anita were directed at a relatively small number of Indian families, but they proved to be extremely important. Anita, who spoke very good Spanish when she arrived, worked industriously at her initial assignment as home
demonstration agent and in the Vicos-Recuayhuanca medical clinic.\(^{52}\) She did her utmost to learn the local Quechua dialect, which she came to speak to some extent.

From this language base and a very outgoing personality, Anita built up the strongest single Peace Corps program in Vicos. She offered to teach a new sectional school in one of the Vicos electoral zones (Wiash) most distant from the central school. Many of the younger children in this zone refused to walk three kilometers to the central school, both because or the sheer distance, and from fear of rough horseplay by older boys.\(^{53}\) This is the sort of decision that Indian parents in the sierra leave to their youngsters. So, many Wiash children received no education simply because they had to go too far to the school.\(^{54}\)

The parents of those timid children, nonetheless anxious that they be instructed, proceeded to donate a house as a school, and the fathers of those children turned out in a volunteer work party to refurbish the house and equip it in a minimal manner. Thus, when the 1963 academic year began in April, Anita opened the Wiash sectional school. Daily attendance at the Wiash School began with some 20 to 25 pupils.\(^{55}\) This amounted to about 10\% of the attendance at the Vicos central school, which included pupils in the upper grades who come from Recuayhuanca and other neighboring settlements.\(^{56}\)

While Anita did not by any means found the primary school system in Vicos, virtually single handedly she opened a new sectional school comprising one-third of the students in Vicos, and one-twelfth of those comprised by the Rural Nuclear School system. During the 1963 school year (the Peruvian academic
year runs from the first of April to mid-December) she taught an average of 20 young pupils who otherwise would not have been instructed in that year. She introduced ideas of hygiene, behavior, and recreation that certainly would not have been introduced into the remote Wiash zone by local teachers for several more years.

Most importantly, Anita was very communicative and built up a warm personal relationship with her pupils and the people of Wiash zone. When the development of the Chancos project brought about a crisis in relations between the Volunteers and members of the Vicos community council, and the council requested that the Volunteers be withdrawn, Anita was asked to return. The people of Wiash zone had prepared a petition approved by the community council and forwarded to the Peace Corps asking that she be re-assigned to Vicos to continue teaching the children in the Wiash sectional school.

Thus, only Anita, among all the Volunteers assigned to the region surrounding Vicos and the Ancash Program, laid a lasting foundation of human relationships that led to continuance of a Peace Corps programs and operations in Vicos.

**Chancos: The Expulsion and the Aftermath**

Though mentioned several times, it has not yet been discussed, the circumstances surrounding the expulsion of the Volunteers from Vicos. The expulsion was a direct result of the inability by the Peace Corps Volunteers to establish amiable relations with both the Vicosinos and the Volunteers’ Peruvian
counterparts. The contextual argument used against the Volunteers during the time of the expulsion was that of the thermal baths and hotel at Chancos, six kilometers away. However, there were many underlying reasons and causes behind the expulsion, some of which have been listed. Chancos was merely the straw that broke the camels back.

One of the original programs that PCVs in Vicos undertook was the acquisition of the Chancos lands and the freeing of the then serfs tied to the manorial estate. Prior to 1933, until sectioned off by its owner and rented separately, the lands at Chancos had been a part of Vicos. On the lands of Chancos had remained fifteen families of Vicosinos who had long wished to be reunited with the community of Vicos. The Vicosinos were all of like mind and wholeheartedly supported any attempts at reunification. Here, the Peace Corps stepped in. Alfred, the other group leader opposite Allan, managed to interest the head of PNIPA into the opportunity to free an additional group of Indian serfs and thereby strengthen the communal farm enterprise of Vicos. The logic was that the Chancos serfs would become members of the Vicos community, Vicos would take over the lands and redistribute them amongst families from both Chancos and Vicos, and the lands would be used for subsistence maize production, as the lands on Chancos were located at a slightly lower altitude and were very fertile for the growing of maize. This extension of the Vicos lands was a natural move for it not only bolstered opportunities for the Vicosinos, but also for the people of Chancos who were related to the Vicosinos by cultural and familial ties.
When the opportunity arose to purchase the lands, the necessary negotiations were conducted and the community of Vicos obtained the lands at Chancos. Part of these negotiations was the take over of management and refurbishment of the hotel and thermal baths at Chancos. These facilities were to be rented by the Vicosinos as the Peruvian government prohibited the owning of natural hot springs. The management of the facilities was to be conducted under the supervision of the Peace Corps. These facilities were in extreme ill repair, and the Peace Corps Volunteers took it upon themselves to fix the place up and use it as a means of providing additional revenue for the Vicosinos.

To purchase these lands, the Vicosinos were forced to take out loans. Through Peace Corps efforts, low interest loans secured from private sources in the United States were obtained to cover the costs of purchasing the land and improving the hotel. While key community leaders understood the conditions of the loan, the community at large did not. The Vicosinos as a whole felt that they were falling into enormous debt and feared that the United States bank which had granted the loan for the hotel might be able to take over their hard earned rights to their lands. Furthermore it was not understood why the acquisition of the hotel took place. Though reluctantly accepted by the community, many thought that this was unnecessary and prohibitively expensive. The community did not understand at the time that the revenues from the hotel would go directly into the community treasury. As a result, the entire process was perceived to be extremely risky by
the conservative Vicosinos. When things didn’t go quite as expected, particularly with the refurbishment of the hotel, the Volunteers suffered the backlash.

Some ten months after the Chancos project had been conceived and begun, relations between PCVs and Peruvian staff had reached a particular low. Furthermore, the nature of the construction at Chancos put the Volunteers in the position of supervisor, directing the work. Vicosinos viewed the Volunteers as the new “patrons” a much-hated position in traditional Indian societies. The Volunteers found themselves, hiring and dismissing personnel, facing labor-management disputes of wages, and trying to impose a more rigid workday like that found on professional construction projects. Moreover, the Volunteers elected a Vicosino who was not in good standing with the community, and they dismissed several men for being drunk on the job, whom turned out to be very influential men in Vicos. This resulted in the further ostracism and isolation of the Volunteers from the Vicosinos. A difficult and unsatisfactory situation had become more complex by the day, and events began to unfold rapidly.

The Volunteers, whose contacts with members of the Indian community were weak, and who were unable to effectively communicate in Quechua, were not able to stop the rising wave of mistrust and fear that began to spread throughout the community. The Cornell Field Director, a Peruvian, had been in the United States for several months, his absence as mediator between the PNIPA staff, the Volunteers, and the Vicosinos, gave ample opportunity for rumors and suspicions to arise. The wife of the Field Director shared many of the
misconceptions and misgivings of the hotel project and she also nursed a deep personal dislike for some of the Volunteers. Finding support among the PNIPA staff, she aided and abetted the negative rumors about the PCVs and urged the community to withdraw from the project and dismiss the Volunteers at the same time. The community council decided to meet and discuss the issue. The many mistakes in social relations the Peace Corps Volunteers made came home to roost. Those Vicosinos who had lost something at the hands of the Volunteers demanded action against them. The primary agitators against the Volunteers argued their points and swayed the voting members at the community meeting. The Volunteers were forced to watch helplessly behind the barrier of their lack of command of Quechua, the language in which the meeting was conducted. Despite the efforts of a member of the Peace Corps staff (Anita) with many friends and acquaintances in Vicos, and the Cornell Project Coordinator, the Volunteers were expelled from Vicos by community decision in March of 1964. The PCVs were then removed from Vicos by the Peace Corps representative until such time that they be asked to return.

Subsequent investigation and action by the Cornell Peru Project field director upon his return from the United States the following week indicated that the Indian community had not wanted to expel all of the Volunteers. Actually, the departure of Anita had caused considerable distress in the Indian community, particularly in Wiash zone where she taught the sectional school. Two weeks after the expulsion, the community formally petitioned to have her and some other
Volunteers (teachers) return to Vicos, and still others to Chancos. The request made quite explicit however, that Alfred and most of the others would work exclusively in Chancos, and would not return, nor live at Vicos.

This episode seems to have had little effect, as far as can be determined, on the nature of the Peace Corps' overall impact on Vicos. The Vicosinos invited Anita back to the community, the one person who had already achieved a positive and notable change, and this opened the way for later assignments of additional Peace Corps volunteer teachers to Vicos. The other Volunteers, two of whose misadventures were chronicled in the preceding pages, were asked to permanently stay out of Vicos.

Thus, only the volunteer who had already contributed significantly to the development of Vicos, was the model for later Vicos requests for Volunteers. Only a schoolteacher had built significant local support, so only schoolteachers were asked to return to the community. Since Anita was nearing the end of her assignment, another girl was transferred in, and she was a successful teacher as well. The new girl taught the second year classes in the Wiash sectional school.

**Vicos: A Lesson Learned?**

To its credit, the Peace Corps did make some organizational changes after the expulsion. It started sending people into areas either alone or in very small teams. It also provided more training and cultural emersion than it had previously done before the incident at Vicos. At the time, the Peace Corps Director in Peru, Frank
Mankiewicz thought that the expulsion was actually a triumph for community development rather than a defeat for the Peace Corps:

"People who took a short range view thought that the Vicos vote was a great defeat for the Peace Corps. I think it was a great triumph for community development. The Vicosinos voted the Peace Corps back in (Anita, not the others) in four or five weeks, but to me that was not nearly as great a triumph as the fact that they felt confident enough to take the vote in the first place. Democracy doesn't guarantee good government, just self government." 74

All was not nearly as rosy however, as Mr. Mankiewicz suggested. Vicos was not an isolated incident by any means. The Peace Corps ran into further trouble during the early years in Jamaica and was actively disdained.75 There were several articles printed in the New York Times as well as the Jamaican Weekly Gleaner about PCVs, lack of organizational structure within the Peace Corps and the Corps' inability to adequately serve the needs the Volunteers running on the ground projects. The Peace Corps also had another incident in Peru at roughly the same time as Vicos, although the two incidents are not in any way related. At the time, PCVs were teaching at the University of Huamanga. At first all was well, then things slowly started to disintegrate. The PCVs were ousted out by a student strike. The reasons behind this expulsion were both political and ideological.76 Many felt that the PCVs were in fact spies for the CIA, a problem that would come back to haunt the Peace Corps during the Vietnam War.

In this unfortunate series of events, one finds many of the classical problems which have afflicted economic and community development throughout the world. Motivated by the best of intentions, the PCVs became enmeshed in that
age-old cultural and social conflict between Indians and mestizos so common in the sierra. The Volunteers' failure to clearly define their role vis-à-vis the community led the Vicosinos to identify the PCVs with the mestizo element, who were both feared and mistrusted. Furthermore, having to work as "boss" on the construction project reinforced the Indians' view of the Volunteers as "patron."

The project at Chancos itself raises further questions. One of the basic assumptions of organizational work is that for community development projects to be successful, they must have the general support and interest of the community. The Vicosinos, although supporting the acquisition of the Chancos lands and incorporation of the Chancos serfs into their community, were far from convinced of the necessity of renting the hotel and thermal baths, incurring additional debt, and entering into contractual arrangements that they did not understand. The fact that the money obtained for the loan was arranged by the PCVs, created additional suspicions that the "gringos" were misappropriating the funds.77 To the Volunteers, such thoughts were unthinkable, but in Peru, it is quite commonplace to suspect the integrity of those who handle public funds. On these grounds, the community not only withheld overt support for the project, but eventually came to actively oppose it upon the urging of disgruntled opponents of the Volunteers.

The Peace Corps has always operated on the model of small-scale independent community development. As previously mentioned, there has always been extreme latitude given to Volunteers in their pursuit of development projects. As a result, there has been very little structural support vis-à-vis the Peace Corps
to guide Volunteers on the ground. This lack of strict hierarchy is both a strength and a weakness of the organization. While some Volunteers thrive under such a system and are able to accomplish much, others feel very lost without guidance of any sort, and as a result flounder about through their tenure as a PCV. This lack of guidance and support gives rise to the sentiments of former Volunteers feeling like they gained much more out of their service than they gave to the communities they were supposed to serve. The motto of the Peace Corps is, *Peace Corps: The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love.* However, there is a joke that floats around among former PCVs and it goes like this: *Peace Corps: The Toughest Job You'll Never Do.* In Vicos this lack of structure and guidance alienated Volunteers as they separated themselves from both the Vicosinos and their mestizo counterparts. This resulted in a failure to complete projects, which later materialized in the form of mistrust and disfavor on the part of the Vicosinos and mestizos who had envisioned the Peace Corps as a being a powerful development tool for their community.

The example of Vicos clearly shows both the successes and failures of the Peace Corps, especially in the early years. Though this is only one example, and by no means the definitive conclusion of all Peace Corps programs, it clearly shows what not to do. One cannot help but wonder how much more the Peace Corps could have accomplished if it had striven to promote good will and amicability to both the Peruvians and the Vicosinos. It is not enough to just
provide support to developing communities, there has to be a sense of compassion and sensitivity to the needs of the people as well.

Though the Peace Corps has not had situations quite like Vicos to deal with since the Vietnam era, the overall operational nature of the Peace Corps has not changed significantly. The biggest gripe from former and current Volunteers seems to be the lack of organizational structure and lack of communication within the Peace Corps. This problem is most apparent between the various Peace Corps Representatives and the Volunteers on the ground whom they are supposed to be coordinating. It seems reasonable that addressing these aspects while maintaining the autonomous nature of volunteer service, could yield positive results.
Endnotes

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12 Ibid.


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54 Ibid.
55 Dobyns et al, 72.
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