

“Me Fui – Building Bridges Between the Venezuelan and Peruvian Communities in Lima Peru”

May 20th - August 09th, 2020. Perú • Connecticut College • Camila Adrianzén '23

Overview of Project. The goal of “*Me Fui*” is to improve unity and peaceful living between Venezuelan migrants and Peruvians. This project is focused specifically on the community “Comité 1 Terrazas 2”, an economically distressed community located in the district of San Juan de Lurigancho (SJL), Lima Perú. This project seeks to integrate these communities and address xenophobic perceptions towards Venezuelans by together building *La losa*, a 20 x 30 meters concrete gathering space. The neighborhood needs a public space for recreational activities and a safe shelter in case of emergencies and natural disasters. In preparation for this project, a group of 10 teens and adults in “Comité 1 Terrazas 2” and the Venezuelan community will be working together in a workshop about refugees, migration and xenophobia.

Background and Demonstrated Need to be Addressed. In recent years, the Venezuelan economic and political crisis has led more than 4 million people to flee their nation in search of asylum. Perú has the second largest Venezuelan migrant population (864,000) with 77.7% of them living in Lima and by 2018, SJL was among the top three districts with the most Venezuelan migrants. Since the refugee and migration crisis started, several xenophobic outbursts around the city have occurred. These acts have been reinforced by the words and actions of public authorities, such as the SJL mayor and an ex-representative of the National Congress. Due to its affordability and access to public transportation, the Venezuelan community continues to grow in SJL. There are 475 Peruvian residents living permanently in “Comité 1 Terrazas 2,” a community on a hillside where many people live in vulnerable situations and lack basic needs. *La losa* is meant to be a recreational and safe space where families can bond with their *vecinos* (neighbors in the community) and where community barriers can be reduced.

Implementation Strategy. For this project I will work with TECHO Perú and *Unión Venezolana en Perú*. TECHO is a Latin American youth-led organization that works to overcome poverty in economically distressed communities through collaborative work between residents and volunteers. *Unión Venezolana en Perú* is an organization that works to support the Venezuelan community in Perú and to promote its integration into Peruvian society. Both organizations are part of the Refugee and Migrant TeamWork (GTRM) led by The UN Refugee Agency (ACNUR) and the International Organization for Migration (OIM) that have been addressing xenophobia with the campaign “TuCausaEsMiCausa.” This campaign creates collaborative spaces and workshops between the Venezuelan and Peruvian community. Due to our prior collaboration, they have agreed to connect me directly with “Comité 1 Terrazas 2,” the Venezuelan community and allied organizations in the GTRM to lead the workshop. “*Me fui*” will have: 1) **Workshops**: 4-week sessions 2) **Community Project**: *La Losa* construction by the community and volunteers. 3) **“Me fui” event**: *La Losa* finishing touches and inauguration with Venezuelan and local volunteers. To secure the number of participants we need for this project, we will spread the word for four weeks and follow up with the interested people through emails and phone calls.

Implementation and Timeline - Preparation (April-May): Communication with allied organizations in GTRM. Design with TECHO Perú to create the “Perspectives on the

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Community” survey for both Peruvian and Venezuelan community members. - ***Summer 2020 (May-August):*** **Week 1:** Preparation + *Losa* work. *Goals:* Meeting with allied organizations in the GTRM. Survey the community with the “Perspectives” survey. **Week 2:** Workshop invitation + *Losa* work. *Goals:* Publicize the project through the whole community and present the project in a general assembly. Adapt workshop after survey results. **Week 3:** Workshop invitation + *Losa* work. *Goals:* Continue previous work and remind people. **Week 4:** Session 1 + *Losa* work. **Week 5:** Session 2 + *Losa* work. **Week 6:** Session 3 + *Losa* work. **Week 7:** Session 4 (Culmination) + *Losa* work. **Week 8:** Finishing touches. *Goals:* Final coordination for the event. **Week 9:** “*Me Fui*” Event. *Goals:* 50 volunteers and local community mobilization. *Losa* inauguration and dedication. **Week 10:** Post visit. *Goals:* Event Satisfaction survey and follow-up “Perspectives” survey. **Week 11:** Evaluation meeting. *Goals:* Feedback with allied organizations in GTRM. – ***Ongoing Work:*** Sharing the results and report with other allied organizations in diverse spaces and platforms. Maintaining *La losa*. TECHO Perú is the organization responsible for building permits and approvals for space and construction of *La Losa*.

Experiences and Qualifications. “*Leaving our family has been the worst.*” and “*I came because of the opportunities I can’t find in my town.*” are statements that drove me to work with the Venezuelan community. I met Marina and Jorge, a Venezuelan refugee family, over the last few years when I was a volunteer with TECHO Perú. Not only did I learn about the struggles regarding poverty and discrimination that people like Marina and Jorge go through, but I also gained many skills throughout my time in TECHO since 2016. I started to know the reality of SJL and the communities as I worked as an activity leader in that district and I met *los vecinos* in “Comité 1 Terrazas 2”. My experiences as an organizer in other communities has prepared me to facilitate workshops and partner with volunteers. My time as a “High School Coordinator” taught me how to work with organizational allies outside of TECHO and my participation as squad leader in “TuCausaEsMiCausa” introduced me to representatives of *Unión Venezolana en Perú*. On campus, I’m choreographing an awareness piece about the Venezuelan refugee and migrant crisis for the multicultural art show “ECLIPSE.”

Assessment and Sustainability. The project includes a pre- and post- survey to understand “Comité 1 Terrazas 2” community perceptions and how they might change through this project. The *Losa* construction plans and ongoing budget had been made by professional architects and civil engineers, working with college seniors in these fields to maintain the space in a good state. TECHO Perú has a long-term work plan with the communities and have been working with “Comité 1 Terrazas 2” since July 2018 on other projects, which will ensure a permanent team of residents and volunteers responsible for maintaining this project. The final report of the project with the feedback evaluation results will be shared and posted on the website where all the organizations in the GTRM share their actions and plans.