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Food for the Hungry Program Ends Extreme Poverty in Santa Barbara, Peru

Celebrates Meeting of Development Goals

PHOENIX (September 2, 2015) – Two hours south of Lima on the Peruvian coastline lies the small hillside town of Santa Barbara. This community was created just 15 years ago, after 42 families fled violent terrorism in the Andes—only to replace one desperate situation with another: abject poverty and hopelessness. The desolate area where they put down roots lacked running water, electricity and sanitation services. Interaction between families was almost nonexistent. In 2003, a group of Santa Barbara mothers, including two sisters, Norma and Alicia, noticed Food for the Hungry (FH) trucks passing by on their way to work in a neighboring town, and that the other community thrived. The sisters asked FH to help them bring an end to their daily struggle with crushing poverty.

“FH changed things for our community,” said Norma. “They helped us to organize, providing training and orientation to our community leaders so that they could coordinate with local authorities to get title to our land, electricity, water and sewer.”

Norma says Food for the Hungry listened to the community describe the challenges they faced. They worked with the community to develop goals for improvement, then helped implement the plan. FH helped with the initial construction of a community center and trained health promoters in the community who helped teach people to prevent disease and to provide better nutrition for their children.

In addition to addressing Santa Barbara’s infrastructure problems, Food for the Hungry helped residents repair important relationships by facilitating interaction among families, and addressing prevalent domestic abuse through a violence prevention program.

“It takes an understanding of what’s holding a community back in order to identify a plan that will end poverty,” said FH President and CEO Gary Edmonds. “Some communities need help with education, or clean water. Santa Barbara asked us to focus on health training and building up families. Ending extreme poverty is complicated, and the solution is different for each community.”

“Before FH came, every family kept to themselves,” said Alicia. “We didn’t know each other or how to reach out to help each other when in need. Through FH trainings, we would get to know each other. Lots of families in the community also had problems with violence, arguments and youth delinquency. FH taught us how to resolve conflicts without violence, how to raise and instruct our children and how to better relate to our spouses.”

FH enters a community with a plan to exit, complete with measurable goals for improvement. It often takes 10-15 years for a community to graduate from stuck to self-sustaining. In June 2015, after 13 years of involvement with Santa Barbara, Food for the Hungry officially celebrated the conclusion of its work in the community with a Community Graduation ceremony. Accomplishments achieved during that time include the following:

- **Character development:** More than a third of the children and teens experienced Bible-centered lessons in character and leadership, preparing them to lead Santa Barbara in coming decades.
- **Stopping abuse:** Families identified domestic violence as one of their community’s worst problems. FH trained parents in more than 70 families in how to raise children without hitting or verbal abuse, and left the community with trained leaders who will continue additional workshops and outreach to families.
- **Spiritual development:** 80 percent of children and adolescents participated in special efforts that helped them understand God’s purpose for their lives. This has helped children and teens dream of careers and new ways to serve their community and families.
- **Improved education:** 80 percent of adolescents are now finishing secondary school; of those, 60 percent have pursued either university or technical school training.
- **Improved health:** 80 percent of parents have improved knowledge of basic health and hygiene, including preventing disease through hand washing, treating diarrhea and parasites, and good nutrition.
- **Improved infrastructure:** The leaders have accomplished significant infrastructure improvements. The community now has potable water services, which are connected to the public system, sewage systems and electricity in every house. All of the families now own their land and have its property title, and therefore have more say in convincing local government to provide future improvements.
- **Safer housing:** In an area where earthquakes are a threat, 70 percent of the houses are made of stable building materials.

About Food for the Hungry

Founded in 1971, Food for the Hungry provides emergency relief and long-term development programs with operations in more than 20 countries to help the world's most vulnerable people. Learn more by visiting fh.org. Social connections include facebook.com/foodforthehungry and twitter.com/food4thehungry.

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