

In late April DESEA Peru had the pleasure to welcome California-based NGO Vitamin Angels along with their sponsors from Vitamin Shoppe, Rainbow Light and Kelly Consulting LLC. During the one-week intensive medical campaign multivitamins were distributed to hundreds of prenatal and lactating women and children under five years of age. As Vitamin Angels can attest, vitamins save lives! The vitamins allow mothers to have healthier births and produce sufficient breast milk. Children's vitamins provide nutrition, strength, healthy growth and energy. Teachers in the project areas report that school attendance has increased and relate this to the distribution of vitamins in the classrooms. In high Andean communities, where the diet is almost exclusively potatoes (one of the few crops that can be grown above 4,000 metres), vitamins provide a vital means of reducing the very high rates of malnutrition. Vitamin Angels has generously offered to continue providing maternal and children's vitamins for DESEA's project communities, as well as for additional NGO and government projects with which DESEA collaborates.

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Check out our amigo Patrice Marier's video of the Mary A. Tidlund Foundation medical campaign with DESEA. (featuring Andean music from friends Wiñay Taki Allyu):

<http://vimeo.com/39268530>

Vitamin Angels kept blogs during their stay in Peru. Visit their website to read more stories from the field: <http://www.vitaminangels.org/peru>. In one blog, founder and president of Vitamin Angels, Howard Schiffer, writes:

*"Our partners from DESEA Peru distributed children's multivitamins to the village children and handed out prenatal vitamins to all of the pregnant women and nursing mothers. Everyone was so appreciative. We had the honor of meeting Juana, the President of the village and a Qhali (health promoter) for DESEA Peru. She is the first woman to be elected President of Chaupimayo. This is all the more amazing because only the men can vote. Juana has a strong vision for her community. She wants to see her people overcome the health issues they currently face. Juana has been an advocate for smaller families and said that now 60% of the women only want to have 2-3 children. This is a major change for this area. One of the amazing things that DESEA Peru has done is to develop a training program so that illiterate women can become Qhalis. They have adapted their approach to use photos of children and mothers on their health cards, and have stamps to record what has been given to the child (e.g. vitamins, vaccinations, etc.). While seven out of their eight Qhalis are illiterate, they are all well-trained health professionals who are making an incredible difference in their villages."*



75 filters installed to date

Prenatal and Postnatal/Neonatal health training has kept the qhalis busy during April and May. They are learning complex topics through a combination of hands-on learning, art, and role playing. Intern Marina Flevotomas has produced culturally-sensitive pictures to demonstrate health decision-making and monitoring. Qhalis are now visiting prenatal patients on a routine basis and are visiting postnatal/neonatal patients weekly during the first 28 days post-delivery – a critical time for both newborns and mothers. Peru has the second highest rate of maternal and infant mortality in Latin America. Since the qhalis began an intensive program of home visiting and educational support, there have been no deaths of children from preventable infections or disease. Community birthing continues to put women at risk, but the qhalis are encouraging birthing in the larger city centers by discussing with expectant mothers the risks of remote community birthing.



Practising emergency deliveries and delivery of the placenta

