

**The Sunampe Project:
Rebuilding a School in Peru Following the 2007 Earthquake**
September 2008

“One year ago, the world around us was destroyed. Today we once again have hope and a future thanks to the contribution of the Jewish Community.”

-- Director, Sunampe School, Chinchá District, Peru

One year after the destructive earthquake that shook Peru on August 15, 2007, the Peruvian Jewish Community continues to be at the forefront of post-disaster efforts. The 8.0 magnitude earthquake was followed by a series of smaller earthquakes and aftershocks measuring between 5.0 and 6.3 in magnitude and caused widespread damage. Official figures issued by the Peruvian government following initial evaluation of the disaster reported 537 people dead, 15 persons missing, more than 1,500 injured and over 80,000 victims in total; nearly 40,000 houses were destroyed, and another 6,300 were damaged; 52 hospitals were destroyed, and another 43 were severely affected. JDC responded to the disaster immediately by sending in relief efforts and aid supplies, as well as extensive medical assistance.



One year after the quake, with JDC support, the Jewish community has rebuilt a public high school in Sunampe, located 200 km south of Lima, in the Chinchá District, which was among the regions hit hardest by the devastation of the quake.

While the Peruvian government and public interest organizations have received a great deal of criticism on the management and delivery of assistance to victims of the quake, the Peruvian Jewish community addressed a specific unmet need in its choice of the Sunampe school as a reconstruction project. This public school is attended by over 700 students and is the only school within a 100-km radius in this rural region.



On Monday, August 25, an opening ceremony was held for the school and attendees included leaders and rabbis from the Jewish Community, the Vice-Minister of Education, the Ambassador of Israel in Peru, donors from the Greater Jewish Federation of Miami, Alejandro Kladniew and Ram Tapia from JDC, authorities of the Sunampe area, American representatives of the Embassy in Lima, members of the Jewish Peruvian Community and the entire community of Sunampe. The inauguration ceremony included performances by the local dancing group of the school and Israeli dances by the Jewish school León Pinelo of Lima, as well as speeches by attending dignitaries that received local media coverage.



The rebuilt school will facilitate a significantly upgraded learning environment for the children of Sunampe. The upgrading of the school included construction of two new modern classrooms, four areas of hygienic services, re-construction and re-design of six pre-existing classrooms, construction of a reservoir to keep water (with a 6000 liter capacity), and construction of a perimeter fence to ensure security for the school. In addition, the school was equipped with an Internet-ready computer room where the first four laptops, a screen and a projector have already been donated and installed. Eight teachers are set to partake in a 60-hour training on the pedagogical use of the Internet and long-term education programs this coming school year. Finally, the children of Sunampe will be able to use the computer room to connect to the Internet for the first time.



The Sunampe Project was initiated by the Jewish Community Network Emergency Committee (which was created 24 hours after the earthquake), supervised by JDC, and realized with the support of a great number of volunteers from the Jewish Peruvian Community and its leaders and Rabbis. Additional support was provided by a number of anonymous US donors and volunteers, and contributions from organizations such as AJC, the Jewish Federation of Miami, and B'nei Brith.