

## Clowning around

The community library was full of smiles last month when the children were treated to a clown performance. The free neighbourhood library in the district of San Sebastian in Cusco, Peru, provides a haven for children to learn and play in a supportive environment.

One of our resourceful volunteers managed to find a real clown, trained in the Patch Adams Clown School, and talked him into coming along to entertain the kids.

The library has never seen so many children at one time. All the tables were hidden away and the main reading room was transformed into a mini-theatre with the chairs, benches and alphabet mats put into rows. A room that usually sees about 15 faces seriously immersed in the adventures of their books was turned into a tank of laughter with children happily squeezed together shoulder to shoulder.



Our clown, used to working with small groups of children, was somewhat amazed to be confronted by the 65 smiling faces that attended his performance. He lived up to his reputation, joking around and playing games with the children until they were squealing with laughter. The children were keen to join in the performance and all had a wonderful time.



## Boys night out

An eighth of a humongous chicken, some tasty fries and a salad buffet costs less than US\$2 in Cusco, but in the boys' orphanage, it was a long anticipated event.

The chicken dinner was offered as an incentive to the boys to attend English classes. They won a sticker for coming to the lesson and could gain more through participation and effort.

The classes were great fun to teach thanks to the enthusiasm of the boys. As long as we had a bit of fun in the classroom, it was easy to keep their attention for an hour. On more than one occasion they called out in protest when they had to wait for us to organise the next part of the lesson.

'Más Inglés! Más Inglés!' - 'More English! More English!'

The boys were just as enthusiastic for us to spend time with them after the lessons. Piggy backs, playing marbles or even just a chat would bring smiles to their faces.

In the last week before the chicken dinner, three of the boys put in a big effort to catch up. One boy in particular, Edberzon, worked really hard right up to the last minute. I'll never forget how grateful he was when he got his last sticker the morning of the dinner - not so much the hugs but the tone of his voice showed just how much he wanted to be there.



When we arrived at the orphanage to walk the boys to the restaurant, they were in very high spirits and they all offered their thanks.

The food was great, perhaps surprising given the price. The boys were unusually quiet as they ate, being distracted by both the food and the cartoons we put on for them in the restaurant. It was only an eighth of a chicken each, but many had the foresight to save half of their chicken for the next day, making themselves doggy bags out of plastic bags.

Walking back to the orphanage the boys asked us when we would be leaving Cusco and when we would come back to see them.

We said hopefully we would be back - and I know we would both love to.

*Contributed by volunteer Andrew Craig*