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**A study of how Peruvian children involved in a social
protection programme experience well-being
and poverty**

PhD THESIS

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London, 2010

Abstract

Even though it is widely recognised that children are the most affected by poverty, children's own experiences of living in social and economic hardship are still not well incorporated into most poverty reduction strategies and programmes. The purpose of this study is to find out how children and families in three rural communities in the southern Peruvian Andes experience well-being and poverty in order to understand what may help them to lead the kinds of lives they value instead of following others' pre-established ideas of what is best for them. The study draws on research carried out with 49 children aged 6-14 years with primary data being collected using a variety of qualitative techniques including social mapping, free drawing, and child-led photography; and interviews with parents, teachers, healthcare professionals, and promoters of *Juntas*, a social protection programme aimed to reduce childhood poverty in Peru. Secondary data from a local household survey were also used. Findings show that young children can take an active role in describing their own well-being and in shaping the most effective response to poverty faced by themselves, their families and communities. Findings also highlight the need of approaching well-being not only from an individualistic perspective but in terms of relationships with others which are embedded into historic, cultural, economic and political processes as well as influenced by broader social structures. This collective perspective of well-being is relevant to programmes like *Juntas* because, if not considered properly, may disrupt social relations and trust between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.