

Peru

Capital: Lima

Area: 1,300,000 sq km

Ethnic groups: Amerindian 45%, Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and white) 37%, white 15%, black, Japanese, Chinese and other 3%

Languages: Spanish (official), Quechua (official), Aymara and a large number of minor Amazonian languages

Administrative divisions: 23 provinces and 1 constitutional province (Callao)

System of government: Constitutional republic

Currency: Nuevo sol

PERU IN FIGURES	
Human Development Index (2003)	0.762 ⁴⁹
Demography	
Population (2005) ⁵⁰	28 million ⁵¹
Population under 15 (as % of total) (2003)	33.2% ⁵²
Economy	
GDP (2004)	US\$ 68.6 billion ⁵³
GNI (per capita)	US\$ 2,360 ⁵⁴
Unemployment (as % of total labour force) (2005 est.)	8.7% ⁵⁵
Inflation rate (2004)	5.7% ⁵⁶
Population living below the national poverty line (1990-2002)	49% ⁵⁷
Health and education	
Life expectancy at birth (2004)	70.4 years ⁵⁸
Adult literacy rate (2004)	87.7% ⁵⁹
Gross primary enrolment ratio (2000)	121.3% ⁶⁰
Survival rate to Grade 5 (2001-2002)	83.6% ⁶¹
Gross secondary enrolment ratio (2000)	86% ⁶²
Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP) (2002)	3% ⁶³
Public expenditure on health (as % of GDP) (2002-02)	2.2% ⁶⁴

⁴⁹ UNDP, Human Development Report 2005.

⁵⁰ The exact figure is 27,219,264 according to the Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas e Investigaciones (INEI), www.inei.gob.pe.

⁵¹ UNFPA, State of World Population 2005.

⁵² UNDP, Human Development Report 2005.

⁵³ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁵⁴ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁵⁵ CIA World factbook 2005

⁵⁶ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁵⁷ UNDP, Human Development Report 2005.

⁵⁸ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁵⁹ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁶⁰ World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁶¹ UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2006.

⁶² World Bank, World Development Indicators database, April 2006.

⁶³ UNDP, Human Development Report 2005.

⁶⁴ UNDP, Human Development Report 2005.

Background

Peru is South America's third largest country. Its geography is varied, ranging from an arid coastal region to the Andes further inland and moist tropical forests bordering Colombia and Brazil. Abundant mineral resources are found in the mountainous areas, and Peru's coastal waters provide excellent fishing grounds.

Since World War II, the population of Peru has grown rapidly and has become predominantly urban. There has been a sharp decline in death rates, caused mainly by improvements in sanitation practices and health care, while birth rates have remained very high. As a result, there has been a surplus of population in many areas, particularly in the Andean region. Overpopulation of the rural areas has been the root cause of the mass migration to the cities that has occurred in Peru since the 1950s. The high rate of population growth has also placed great pressure on Peru's educational and health care systems.

Economy and development

In recent years, Peru has had one of the best performing economies in Latin America, largely attributable to growth in the mining and export sectors. GDP grew 4.9 per cent in 2002, 3.8 per cent in 2003 and an estimated 5 per cent in 2004.

Peru is the world's second-largest producer of silver, sixth-largest producer of gold and copper, and a significant source of the world's zinc and lead. Mineral exports have consistently accounted for the most significant portion of Peru's export revenue, averaging around 50 per cent of total earnings in 1998 to 2005. However, overdependence on minerals and metals subjects the economy to fluctuations in world prices, and a lack of infrastructure deters trade and investment.

Despite Peru's strong macroeconomic performance, unemployment and poverty have remained consistently high. One-fourth of children under five are malnourished. Wealth and economic activity are overly concentrated in Lima and other major cities, with rural Andean and jungle areas suffering extreme poverty. The government lacks revenues for adequate social investment.

Education

Primary education lasts for six years and is compulsory. A year of pre-primary education is also compulsory. Secondary education covers five years divided into two cycles and, according to the 1993 Constitution, is also compulsory. Compulsory education is difficult to enforce, however, especially outside urban centres. Because of extremely large class sizes, inadequate facilities and poorly trained teachers, the quality of education received by children in public schools is regarded as low.

Parents face many difficulties in enrolling their children in school. One common problem is the lack of identity papers, either because the parents did not register their child at birth or because the documents were lost when the family migrated from one community to another. Furthermore, in rural communities, parents give preference to the education of boys. Whether for boys or girls, there are not enough secondary schools.

In general, however, the main obstacle to accessing public education is the cost of education, which many poor families cannot afford. Public education in Peru is not free. In addition to direct costs, such as school fees, there is an annual fee that must be paid to a parents' body, the APAFA, before a child is allowed to study, and there are further costs such as books, uniforms, school materials and transport. For families living in extreme poverty, these costs represent a formidable barrier to placing their

children in the formal education system. A factor that influences poor families' decision to send their children to school is the provision of food and health care.

Child labour situation

Child labour is on the increase in Peru. In the last 10 years, the incidence has grown considerably. Some 2 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 are working. This means that out of the total population of girls, boys and adolescents, 27 per cent – more than one in four – are doing some kind of work. In general, there

are more economically active children in urban areas (53.8 per cent), than in rural areas (46.2 per cent). The number is higher among girls and higher in poor areas/households. The number of those economically active also increases with the age of the child.

Children work in agriculture and informal activities. Some of them are employed in the worst forms of child labour, such as sexual exploitation, brick-making, dumping, mining and coca plantations. Other occupations include market and street trading, textiles and domestic service. In all cases, labour affects school attendance and performance.