

Peruvians Face Daunting Task Of Rebuilding What Was Lost

After Quake, Families Living in Tent Cities Focus on Recovery

The Washington Post
August 26, 2007

PISCO, Peru -- Carmen Angulo tells visitors to step carefully when entering her home. Pots and pans lie to the right, clothes to the left, and her three children, her parents and a few nieces and nephews nap on mattresses tossed on the floor.

This is not the way she would normally invite people in, but this is not her normal house.

Angulo now lives in a big white tent.

Like more than 40,000 other families living along [Peru's](#) coast, the Angulos lost their house in the magnitude-8 earthquake on Aug. 15 and now face the daunting task of rebuilding communities reduced to rubble.

"We were on the street with nothing before this shelter was opened," said Angulo, 29, who is staying in a tent city with 300 other families on what used to be the soccer field and playground of a now-destroyed school. "We have been given everything we need for the time being. Now we have to start rebuilding our lives."

The supplies that have helped residents here get through the past 10 days have come from an international aid drive that so far has poured more than 12,000 tons of food, water and supplies into [Pisco](#). The city, about 120 miles south of [Lima](#), and several smaller communities bore the brunt of the quake, which killed more than 500 people, seriously injured more than 1,000 and left 100,000 homeless, according to the most recent figures.

Peru's president, [Alan Garcia](#), has personally coordinated much of the relief effort. The government is now shifting focus to the cleanup and rebuilding phase, and Garcia has announced plans to appoint a "reconstruction czar."

To help the families who lost their homes, the government issued emergency decrees providing them with \$1,900 each. Those whose relatives were injured or killed are also eligible for emergency funds.

But many of the farms and businesses that provided people here with steady incomes were also destroyed by the earthquake, which further complicates recovery. Thousands of people who had been employed in the area's garment production factories remain out of work, according to Production Minister Rafael Rey.

The government has budgeted an initial \$100 million for cleanup and reconstruction, Rey said. The administration estimates that the earthquake could reduce economic growth by about 0.5 percent, pegged at around 8 percent for the year.

As the victims of the earthquake wait for prefabricated homes to replace the newly erected tent communities, many residents are hoping the government will help them make the transition back into the work force by hiring them for the rebuilding effort. The government plans to hire 8,000 people from the quake zone for the cleanup and reconstruction phase.

"I have my name on a list for work," said William Cordova, a Pisco resident who lost his home and now lives in the tent camp. "I used to fix TVs, but there isn't going to be work in that for a long time. They are going to pay \$4.50 a day, which is something."

Bulldozers have torn down houses too damaged to salvage. To control outbreaks of disease, crews are fumigating some areas.

The government estimates that it will take about two months to build the prefabricated homes. Claudio Williams, the general manager of the company that manages the tent community, said six months would probably be a more realistic estimate.

"Our idea is to help people retake control of their lives," said Williams, who is with [Aramark](#), a U.S.-based professional services company. "The tents cannot replace homes, but they are a start. The goal is for us to pull out in a few weeks, leaving the camp operating on its own,"

Each tent camp is like a small [United Nations](#) of aid and supplies. The Angulos' camp includes tents from [Italy](#), a water system from [Spain](#), and supplies from [Argentina](#), [Brazil](#) and [Venezuela](#). A Peruvian religious congregation and a U.S. mining company co-manage the camp with Aramark.

Camp managers have organized tent residents into teams to string lights, build latrines and put up food halls.

There are also comforts most of the residents did not have before. Aramark was installing a satellite dish and computers this week to provide residents with Internet access. There have also been hamburgers and Happy Meals from [McDonald's](#), which has set up temporary operations in Pisco, a city without fast-food chains.