MARGARITA
EDUCATION IS THE TOOL TO FULFIL DREAMS

Margarita* is 15 years old and is in her third year of secondary school in her hometown Colpaccasa, Huancavelica. She is a teenager full of joy and desire for self-improvement.
Despite the difficulties she has dealt with during the pandemic, she has not lost faith in education and hopes to go back to class to keep learning and growing as a person.

**The name has been changed according to our Safeguarding Policy.*

Margarita* is a 15 year-old teenager full of joy, self-confidence and, above all, the desire for self-improvement. She lives in the town of Colpaccasa, is in her third year of secondary school and, for the past 2 years, she has been participating in Save the Children's activities in the region.

At the age of 10, her parents José* and Martina* migrated from their hometown of Colpaccasa because of poverty and lack of work in the region. When they left, Margarita* became the new head of household and took responsibility for her home, herself, and Bruno*(11), her little brother.

She has had the same routine for several years. Every day, Margarita* wakes up very early to do the household chores: she lights the fire to prepare food, cleans the dishes, washes and irons the clothes, and neatly cleans the house. She does this until nightfall.

Luckily, in addition to all her duties, she has time to study and talk to her friends, which makes her feel like any other teenager of the same age.

“My little brother is great, he helps me in everything, and we split the household chores. We are a team because it is just the two of us.”

“My parents have been working far away for many years. When we were children, my grandma, who lives in Pucaccasa, took care of us. Now we are older, and my grandma is elderly, so we take care of ourselves and live on our own in our house in Colcapaccsa. We do everything alone and sometimes my aunt comes to check on us.”

When the pandemic started, everything turned more difficult and stressful for Margarita*. She looked very sad when her opportunity to attend classes disappeared, which was important for her not only for learning and studying, but also as a distraction from her busy life.

On top of her mixed feelings, she had to face other challenges. In the first place, she had to face the challenge of remote education and the limitations to connect to internet, radio and television. In addition, she had to find strength, even when she felt weak, in order to be the emotional support for her little brother Bruno* and manage to be his main teacher, so he could continue with his education.

"Face to face education was nice, I felt happy going to school. It just took me 10 minutes to walk there. I liked going because I could study, learn a lot and talk to my friends; we helped each other."

Her brother and she felt lonely during the pandemic. They understood the circumstances that kept them away from their parents, but, deep down, they wished they were with them to feel safe and protected.

Due to uncertainty, fear and without a family to rely on, Margarita* said that her saddest experiences were during the first year of the pandemic. She remembers having to climb the highest part of the hill, enduring rain and cold, just to get a mobile phone signal and communicate with her teachers.

"This year, I'm doing better in virtual classes. Last year, we went to the top of the hill every day to get a signal and it took us an hour walking. This year, we have a signal and it is less difficult to study. Now my brother and I must share one mobile phone."

Despite all she has gone through, Margarita* is not giving up nor quitting her studies. She is aware of the important role that education has in the integral development of people. Her goal is to get an academic degree to become someone in life and have a better future, which she would like to share with her family and those in need.

"I don't want to be a housewife because it isn't nice doing the same every day (...) I want to study to be someone in life (...) I see girls that quit studying because they are in a relationship. I don't understand how they can do that and not value the sacrifice of their parents to send them to school."

KEEP DREAMING KEEP LEARNING

Margarita* was part of the project "Keep children safe, healthy and learning in Nicaragua and Peru." She received a school kit that contains a rucksack, dictionaries, storybooks, workbooks and biosafety equipment. Margarita participated in an artistic expression contest called "Little artists, big heroes", an activity in which she was one of the winners.

> **"Yes, I'm using the materials that I received, especially the dictionaries I used to have to search on my mobile phone, now it is easier. I lend the storybooks to my little brother. He reads them again and again because he likes them a lot."**

Margarita* and her brother Bruno* got behind in their learning with distance education. Due to lack of resources, they were forced to use the same school supplies, the same mobile phone and they even had to choose who was going to listen to classes first. Although they tried really hard to keep up with their education, neither of them felt they learnt enough during the past school year.

Now, with their school supply kits and the mobile phone she won in the contest, Margarita* and her brother will no longer take turns listening to classes, and they have started to study at their own pace, in separate spaces with their own materials.

ABOUT THE PROJET

Save the Children implemented the project "Keep children safe, healthy and learning in Nicaragua and Peru" in eight rural communities of Huancavelica in Peru, with the support of Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF).

The objective was to guarantee access and continuity to quality and inclusive education, taking into consideration the security and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children and teenagers during the suspension of in-person classes.

Due to the increase of students that stop studying because they did not have the necessary resources to continue with distance learning, this initiative prioritised the delivery of educational and artistic materials, emotional support training for teachers, as well as informative materials about biosafety to prevent and protect against COVID-19.

During the implementation, the project achieved a positive impact on 43 teachers and 969 students along with their families, who are now more motivated to cope with distance education and prepared to gradually return to in-person learning.