



IN-DEPTH COMMUNITY  
PROFILE:

**PAROBAMBA**

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# INTRODUCTION

**Your team has been matched with Parobamba, Peru. This community is working with NGO Mosqoy-Q'ente.**

Parobamba is a rural indigenous community of about 300 inhabitants located in the Challabamba district in the highlands of Peru, north of the city of Cusco. This district is at the edge of the Cusco department, and borders the Manu National Park, a biosphere reserve on the edge of the Peruvian tropical rainforest. Parobamba is very isolated and hard to access, and as in many other rural communities, its inhabitants have received little attention from the government over the years. Although many villagers have migrated to cities in the search for jobs, Parobamba strongly values its ancestral traditions and their connection to the surrounding land. The community has many projects for the future in order to preserve traditional practices and bring a better quality of life to its people.



MOSCOY is a Peruvian-Canadian organization that promotes social justice and cultural rights in the Peruvian Andes through local and global initiatives. Since its creation in 2006, MOSCOY has been working with 18 rural communities with the incentive to facilitate economic integration while preserving the local culture. MOSCOY fulfills its objectives through three social and economic development programs that are based on the communities' collective determination of local socio-economic needs: 1) Q'ente-The Textile Revitalization Program, 2) the Andean Youth Program (Mosqoy offers post-secondary scholarships to youth from rural Andean communities, and 3) the Global Stewardship Program (Mosqoy promotes responsible tourism and international awareness for youth abroad).

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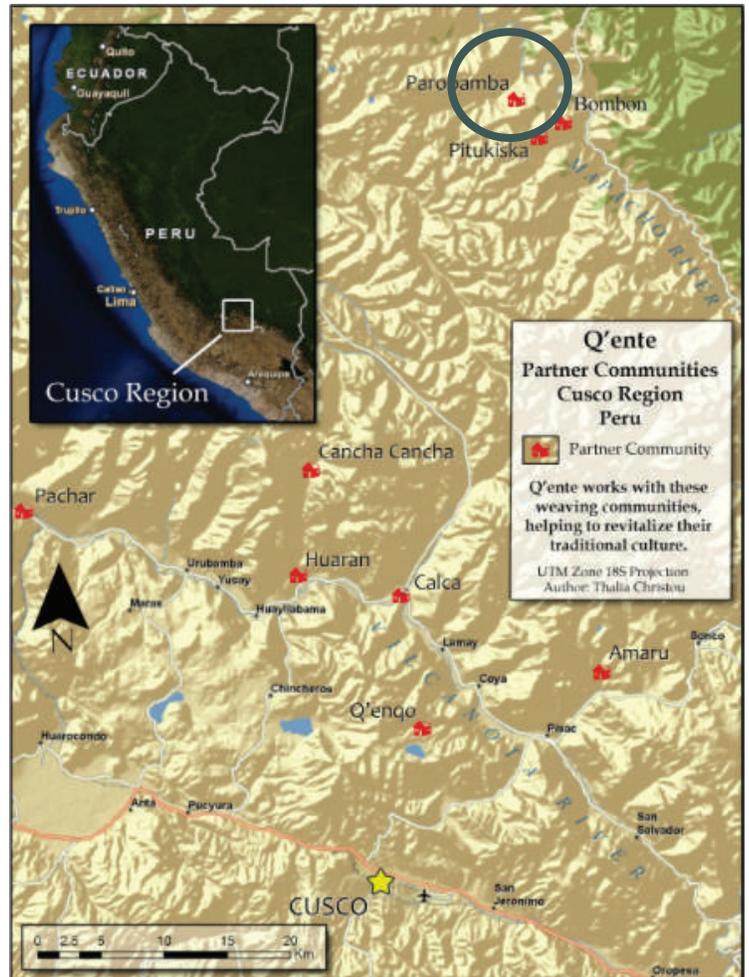
- (1) To provide a faithful description of the community of Parobamba.
- (2) To give a general sense of where the community is at and where it intends to go in the future.
- (3) To present the strengths and capacities of Parobamba (which were identified by the villagers of Parobamba and by Mosqoy-Q'ente).
- (4) To highlight the areas that the community wants to work on/potential target areas.

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# PAROBAMBA

Parobamba is at an altitude of 3200 meters above sea level and is located in a very mountainous area, on the side of a hill above the Mapacho River Valley. The community is located in the Challabamba District, Province of Paucartambo, Department of Cusco in Peru.

The land on which Parobamba lies has been inhabited by the villagers' ancestors for hundreds of years. Several pre-Incan funerary towers which lie steps away from the community prove so. The community is also surrounded by beautiful lakes and mountains.



# DEMOGRAPHICS

**POPULATION:** 300 inhabitants in Parobamba and 3000 in all 11 surrounding communities.

- Men/Women distribution: 50-50%

- Age range: The population of Parobamba is mostly made up of people aged 40+ or younger than 16 years old. A majority of men between the ages of 16 and 30 leave the village.

**FAMILY STRUCTURE:** Mostly families, 3-6 kids per family.

**MIGRATION:** 16-30 year olds generally migrate to the city in search for education or job opportunities. Women are mostly the ones to stay (since most do not more than one or two years of primary school). Women work in the fields or as weavers. Men that stay work in the fields, and a few of them work for governmental projects present in the area. Some men used to work at the nearby mine but that mining operation pulled out a month ago (see more details under “Environmental Vulnerability”).

**LANGUAGE:** The main language used in Parobamba is Quechua, although Spanish is also spoken by some--mostly men and school-aged children. Most women do not speak Spanish, and only school-aged kids speak both languages.

**EDUCATION:** Literacy: Around 50% of the population is able to write and read. Most men in Parobamba speak Spanish and have basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills. This is not the case for women (see more details under “Education”).



# GEOGRAPHY



## ANNUAL PRECIPITATION RATES IN MM. (SOURCE: SENHAMI)

- Annual rate: 200-1500
- Summer (December-February): 200-1000
- Fall (March-May): 50-700
- Winter (June-August): 0-200
- Spring (September-November): 100-500

## TEMPERATURE: There are 3 microclimates in the area:

- Lower land: 25-28C (This is where coffee, avocado, yucca, cucho, corn, tomato, and sugar cane are harvested)
- Middle land (where Parobamba is located): 10-15 C (This is where potatoes, lisas (a type of potato), vegetables, wheat, beans, and quinoa are harvested)
- Higher land: 7-8 C during the day and goes down to -10C in colder months (This is where native potatoes grow)

**ACCESS:** Route, transportation methods, and prices for the trip from Cusco City to Parobamba.

## CUSCO CITY - PAROBAMBA

- Cusco to Calca: 50 km; 2 hours; Bus (Price: 5 PEN [Peruvian Nuevos Soles-“Soles”] = 1.9 CAD)
- Calca to Amparaes: 37 km; 2-3 hours; Van “combi” (Price: 10 Soles = 3.8 CAD)
- Amparaes to Parobamba: 4 hours; Hike

## CUSCO CITY - PAROBAMBA

- Parobamba to Amparaes 3 hours; Hike
- Amparaes to Calca: 37 km; 2-3 hours; Van (“combi”): (Price: 10 Soles = 3.8 CAD)
- Calca to Cusco; 50 km; (Van): 2 hours; (Price: 4 Soles= 1.5 CAD)

Round trip cost from Cusco city to Mapacho River Valley is approximately 30-35 Soles = 11.6-13.5 CAD.

Trucks and combis leave Calca between 4:00 and 6:00 AM to go to Amparaes and/or Parobamba, and they typically leave Amparaes for Parobamba around 9:00 AM. They leave from Parobamba to Amparaes at 4.30 AM.

There is a food truck that comes once every two weeks.

**NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES:** The nearest catchment towns are Amparaes, Calca and Paucartambo. Other nearby villages are Bombom, Sauci, and Pitukiska.

# ACCESS TO SERVICES

**SANITATION:** Sanitation services are not very developed and there is no running water. Families use latrines.

**ACCESS TO WATER:** The community chlorinates a nearby reservoir once a week and many families have taps that connect to it. However, this water is often contaminated with animal feces and therefore, most people prefer to get their water from nearby streams.

**ELECTRICITY:** Only a small portion of the houses have access to electricity.





# HEALTH



**MEDICAL CENTRE:** There is 1 medicinal center that has been running for 13 years. Nurses, a technician and one doctor are placed there one year at a time.

**VACCINATIONS:** Most children get vaccinated by government programs at the local medical center.

## **PREVAILING DISEASE/INJURY:**

- Rheumatic disorders (such as arthritis and osteoporosis): High prevalence in women. Many weavers sit on the floor for very long hours in a hunched position which causes back and waist injuries. Mosqoy-Q'ente representatives think that a potential middle-ground solution could be achieved by respecting traditional methods of weaving.

- Impaired eyesight: The medical center offers no access to optometric treatment. This is also a recurrent problem for weavers, because while weaving, they often sit in positions that blocks the light, which harms their eyesight.

- Infant Malnutrition: Food security is an issue in Parobamba and children do not get sufficient micronutrients. A government program called "Vaso de Leche" distributes formula to mothers of children under 5 years old.

- Alcoholism: Women from the weaving association have reported that many young men who go to work in other towns and cities often begin drinking heavily.

- There is a high rate of teenage pregnancy

## **OTHER THREATS TO HEALTH:**

Domestic violence: Due to a lack of disaggregated data, it is difficult to speak confidently about the situation of indigenous women in the country. Nonetheless, in the most recent reports on Peru, ( UN Special Report on the Rights of Indigenous people and the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women Report) noted that indigenous women are most likely to be exposed to violence. This is especially the case in communities near extraction projects

In the interviews that Mosqoy carried out with the members of the weaving association in the 2015, several interviewees hinted at, and in some cases openly spoke about violence against them by their partners.

There seems to be a correlation between increased income of women and decreased domestic conflicts. As one weaver says: it was "calmer in her family now that she was contributing to familial income" through her income from weaving sales.

# EDUCATION

## EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES:

- Local schools: There is an elementary school and a high school in the village.
- Children from surrounding communities travel here to come to school. Children from Sauci walk for 3 hours. Some stay here all week and rent a house.

## DROP-OUT RATES:

- The large majority of women in Parobamba do not get through primary school. According to a UN Special Report on the Rights of Indigenous People of Peru, the drop-out level of indigenous girls between 12 and 16 years old is 89.1%. In Parobamba, women tend to drop-out after first or second grade.
- According to interviews with women from a weaving association, most of the education received by women who drop out is not retained, and does not transcend into their adult life.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION:

- Teachers: In interviews with Mosqoy, members from the community mentioned that they are dissatisfied with the competency of school teachers, especially those teaching secondary school.
- Technology: There are a few computers at the schools- but no technology classes are taught, therefore most kids do not know how to use them.
- Language of instruction: The curricula is taught in Spanish and only 1 hour of Quechua classes is allocated per week. According to a recent census, almost 16% learned an indigenous language in their childhood. 100% of people in Parobamba speak Quechua.

In countries with indigenous populations, it is a common phenomenon for their languages to be excluded from school curricula. “This undermines indigenous children’s ability to achieve school readiness and express their cultural identity in school. National school curricula tend to have very little, if any, focus on indigenous peoples, their issues and histories.” (UN Special Report on the Rights of Indigenous people of Peru).



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## HOUSING:

- Materials: Most houses are made of cement walls with metal roofs although some are more precarious and have roofs made of straw. Most houses have dirt floors.

- Ventilation is an issue, especially since women tend to cook inside the houses on clay stoves fired by wood.

## VILLAGE INFRASTRUCTURE:

- Road: There is a relatively new road that connects Cusco to Amparaes although it is a bumpy road to Parobamba after that.

- There is a Community Center that is mostly used for communal assemblies.

## COMMUNICATIONS:

- Phone access: There is 1 phone shared by the community.

- Cell phone use: There is no signal in Parobamba. Some villagers own cell phones but they have to go down to Amparaes to use them

- Internet access: Some computers with internet access are available at the local high school.

**MEDIA AND INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION:** Parobamba is mostly cut-off from communication. No information on political matters is imparted through education or media (even if presidential elections are mandatory).



# ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

**PRIMARY OCCUPATIONS:** Subsistence Agriculture, Small-holder farms, Weaving, construction work in surrounding cities

## AGRICULTURE:

### Harvest seasons:

- In lower lands: Planting occurs from March to May, and harvests are in October and November. Plants take 6 months to grow.
- In Higher altitudes: Planting occurs from July to August, and harvests from May to June. Plants take 8 months to grow.

**Seeds:** The seeds used for agriculture are bought at markets in neighboring towns as Parobamba does not count on the technology/knowledge needed to develop a seed breeding system.

### Main crops:

- Potatoes - 5 varieties: Maktillo, huayro, yungai, parwanita, boli (native).
- Corn - 2 varieties: white and yellow: they plant September to October and harvest June to July.
- Lisas - 1 variety: they plant May to July, harvest May to June.
- Oca- 1 variety: they plant May to July, harvest may to june
- Horticulture: carrots, squash, cauliflower, cabbage (of very high quality), lettuce
- Fruits and coffee: in lower areas

Everything is organic; it is an “ecological zone” and no chemical products are used. They fertilize with manure of sheep and guinea pig.

**Livestock:** Alpacas and llamas are raised for sale in nearby towns (or consumption on very special occasions).

### Commercialization:

- Most villagers are subsistence farmers
- A minority of Parobambans sell their crops outside the village.
- Foreign buyers sometimes come to buy products (especially native potatoes).





# ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

**WEAVING:** There are 3 weaving associations in Parobamba. These associate with outside partners (such as Mosqoy) to sell their products. Some weavers go to Chinchero (a commercial town close to Cusco) to sell their weavings for low prices. Weavers are often women, although men are sometimes involved.

**WOOL:** No wool is produced in Parobamba. Women buy wool from Inkacancha and other communities in the highlands. Most wool is bought already spun and is then dyed in Parobamba to save time. Some wool is handspun and in that case, both types are then combined in the weaving process.

**OTHER OCCUPATIONS:** Artisanal work, small commerce, and some men work as porters for the Inca Trail.

**AVERAGE INCOME:** 300-500 soles per family per month

In the rural highlands of Peru, the poverty line lies at 139 Soles (=53.8 CAD) per month per person.

- Some families earn up to 1000 Soles (= 387 CAD) a month but this has to be divided by many family members.

- Each month, JUNTOS (a government program) distributes S/100 (38.74 CAD) to each family.

**FOOD SECURITY:** In Parobamba, moderate food security keeps most families afloat but there is limited disposable income for expenses such as school books, and there are little possibilities of saving income.

Subsistence agriculture is the main source of food. However, many families, especially those with single parents, have trouble getting food. The only food that is sold in the village comes in a truck every two weeks.

**FREQUENT EXPENSES:** Children's educational fees (books, school uniforms, etc.), medical expenses, transportation to city and back.

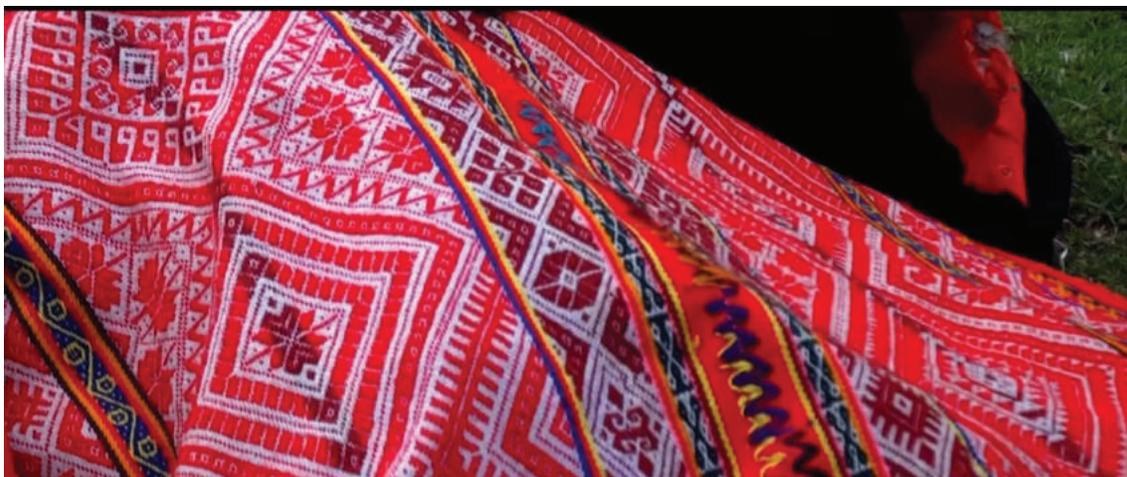
# NATURAL RESOURCES



## NATIVE PLANTS COLLECTED BY THE COMMUNITY IN THE SURROUNDING AREAS:

- Medicinal plants : Yantin, ratarata, malba, yawachinca, matico, pachaqera
- Edible plants: None
- Others:
  - Plants for dyeing wool: Quinsicucho, chapi, tiri, yanalli. These species are slowly disappearing, and there are no conservation programs. Plants are collected from the wild and they are not harvested sustainably.
  - Eucalyptus trees. These are useful for construction and firewood (used for cooking). They are easy to maintain, and they grow fast. However, they need twice as much water as the native trees, and there is a threat of depleting the aquifer that the community uses for drinking water. They also take a lot of nutrients from the soil so that native trees cannot grow around these. Years ago, 3600 trees were planted by priests and then Cusco donated 25,000 trees to the area.

**BEES:** There is a lot of wild honey around the area, however, it is very difficult to collect. 5 families from the community farm bees and produce honey in small quantities. They have a contract with an ecological store in Cusco City.



# ENVIRONMENT

**FLOODS:** The area around Parobamba has been affected by floods over the last years. However, Parobamba was not affected by the floods in the ways as neighboring communities were.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE:** The villagers interviewed state that the sun has been stronger in the past years and this seems to affect their crops negatively (especially potatoes). They also state it might be a cause for the disappearance of many of the plants that they used to collect around the town (especially and plants used as dye for wool).

The construction of a gas pipeline will start soon in the nearby town of Amparaes (a connection point between Parobamba and Cusco City). There are questions as to how this will affect Parobamba.

## THE MINE:

A copper mine in state of exploration lies near Parobamba. The Aurora Parobamba mining operation owned by mining company Focus S.A.C built platforms and began explorations (where many Parobamba men were employed).

Withdrawal: Parobamba is the first indigenous community in Peruvian history to be formally consulted in regards to a mining project according to the “2011 Law of Right to Prior Consultation of Indigenous or Native Peoples” After an environmental assessment performed by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the operation was given a red light and the operation had to withdraw for the area. Although this does not guarantee its comeback in the future since the structures and platforms are still in place.

Perceptions on the mine depend. Some villagers Some of the changes in nature are sometimes attributed to the mine, by the villagers.



# ENVIRONMENT



## WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT/LAND?

(This section is all based on responses of women from the weaving association)

- There is a lack of consciousness to take care of the earth. People are not always aware of their actions on the environment. Some people attribute the changes that they are seeing to a punishment from God.

- The elders who hold the traditional knowledge are dying or have died so there is a lack of transfer of knowledge about the environment.

- People throw a lot of garbage around the village.

- Children are taught about the environment in school environment, but this does not seem to translate outside of the classroom.

**GARBAGE DISPOSAL:** There is no formal garbage disposal: Garbage is buried in landfill holes around Parobamba - once these are filled, they are covered up and new ones are created.

This “disposal” is achieved through “faenas” (communal work). Once every 2-3 months, villagers must get together to pick garbage up and take it to the landfills. Women do this once a month. Failure to participate results in a fine.

## WHY IS THERE LITTERING AND INAPPROPRIATE GARBAGE DISPOSAL IF THE EARTH IS SO HIGHLY RESPECTED BY PAROBAMBA INHABITANTS?

An answer brought up by interviewees was that since plastic is a relatively new material, the community was never taught how to deal with it and began treating it as organic waste. There was an influx of new materials 20-30 years ago, and since their disposal was never discussed, it is now inefficient and polluting.



# CULTURE



Parobamba is a quechua indigenous community recognized as an autonomous group.

**ANDEAN PHILOSOPHY:** is very present and villagers maintain traditions such as:

- Weaving tradition - an important way of expression and communication of symbolism.
- Traditional burials - the deceased are buried in white wool which signifies purity.
- Offerings - when someone is sick “despacho”/offerings are made at specific places in order to cure the person.
- Belief in sacredness of special animals and plants (ex. black guinea pig) - this influences practices in health, and daily life.
- Traditional medicine - medicinal plants are used to treat disease and injuries and there is a general sense of mistrust towards Western medicine.

**RELIGION:** In colonial times, Catholicism was syncretized with Andean philosophy. Parobamba inhabitants maintained their belief in Mother Earth, Father Sun, and other deities but began holding God as an entity above all.

In recent years, the Evangelical Church came into the community and this has been a divisive issue since many Parobambans converted from Catholicism to Evangelism.





# GOVERNANCE

## POLITICAL ORGANIZATION:

### Leadership

- A District Mayor serves the district of Challabamba (which includes Parobamba and 20 other small villages)
- A Parobamba President is elected through voting every 3 years (all villagers that are over 20 years old can vote).

### Communal Assemblies

- Take place once a month; last an entire day.
- The President and his team meet beforehand to create an agenda and during the assembly, all the villagers vote on the issues brought up. In practice, only men attend assemblies.

**JUSTICE:** A judge is periodically elected at assemblies - that person has to be over 30 and is in charge of making decisions in cases of minor delinquency. This role has always been taken by a man.

**Punishment:** There is an informal prison “calabozo” where people are put into in case of minor delinquency (2-3 days on average). In case of serious crime police from Amparaes will intervene

## PRESENCE OF EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONS:

### Governmental

- Vaso de Leche (provides formula to mothers of children under 5 years of age)
- JUNTOS (an organization who distributes S/100 (38.74 CAD) to each family on a monthly basis)

### Partnerships

- Mosqoy-Q’ente
- Awana Cancha (another weaving organization)
- Casa Ecologica (partner for honey sales in Cusco City)



# GOALS

## WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT THE COMMUNITY (AS DESCRIBED BY LOCALS)?

- The microclimates and vast amount of nature around the village.
- The quality of pastures
- The community's customs and traditions.

## GOALS:

- To increase quality of education and health systems.
- To improve the general quality of life.
- To breed smaller animals such as guinea pigs and chickens).
- To improve agriculture.
- To get technical assistance from the government for agriculture.
- To preserve the community's culture and traditional practices.
- To organize the community and concretize communal goals that can be targeted together and that will bring benefit to all, instead of fostering inequalities and jealousy among villagers.
- To find a larger customer base in order to have more orders for textiles and increase textile production. In this way, they expect to sell the products in Cusco City and elsewhere (Mosqoy-Q'ente is an important actor in this).





# GOALS

HERE ARE SOME PROJECTS PROPOSED BY PAROBAMBA COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

- Weaving Center
- Environmental education center for children
- A dye garden and reforestation project: Many native plants are on the verge of extinction. Every time they go to harvest, they notice that plants are decreasing rapidly. State organizations and NGOs are not involved in plant conservation. There is a need for information on species and methods to domesticate them and/or preserve them. They would also need to learn about what kind of local conditions each plant thrives in. This project would require ongoing monitoring.
- Develop tourism in the area: the community has begun to brainstorm many attractions such as hot springs, ruins, lookouts, plant identification, bees and weaving demonstrations.
- Planting a native tree called Aliso to stop erosion.
- Cultivate pine for export.





