

Family support networks in Peruvian barrios prevent child labor

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A recent study by the University of Seville Personal and Community Network Laboratory (Laboratorio de Redes Personales y Comunidades) has shown that family support networks have value in preventing child labour. A survey carried out among parents in high-risk contexts shows that schools in barrios on the outskirts of Lima are a central part of life of the community, as they allow families from the district to start and develop relationships with each other; and they serve as points of access for valuable resources from outside the barrio.

The study consisted of a survey carried out among 138 mothers and fathers from three schools in barrios on the outskirts of Lima (Peru). All three barrios contributed information to the programme "Educame Primero Perú," which aims to prevent [child labour](#). The survey included information about the personal networks of those interviewed and was complemented by observations over the two years. The research allowed for the identification of barrios in which interaction with neighbours was most frequent and showed the central role that schools play in community life.

Among the study's most significant results is the existence of relationships that involve the exchange of information and social support between families in the barrio. This is a resource that prevents child labour. Mutual knowledge networks between homes seem to play a role in social control, and have a preventative value.

Some of the fundamental stages for these types of relationships are concentrated in the schools. The mothers and fathers of the barrio establish relationships at the [school](#) gates, at parties organised by the schools, at tutorials and at schools for parents. Family networks are less developed in more recent human settlements, with a shorter history of community development. In these poor barrios, in which there is greater risk of child labour, schools can be a bridge to finding

resources connected to work and services outside their district.

Clustered graphs

The research used a new visualisation technique of plotting [personal networks](#) on clustered graphs. Each interviewee discussed about 45 personal relationships that they had in the city of Lima (whether inside or outside the barrio where they lived). This provided data about more than 6,000 relationships, which could be represented in graphical summaries showing the contacts according to the preferred place of interaction (the market, the church, the home, the workplace, etc.) The barrio school is one of the most likely contexts for the development of relationships, and has a role in interaction with other parts of the barrio.

The evaluation of the programme has shown that some of the most effective strategies for the reduction of child labour are the conditioned transfer of cash, the development of agreements and coalitions between employers and trade unions, and psycho-educational programmes. The research carried out in the poor barrios in Lima shows that family support networks improve the implementation of programmes and can help as a generic facilitator in prevention programmes.

More information: Isidro Maya-Jariego et al, The Community Role of Schools in Jicamarca and Villa El Salvador (Peru): Crosscutting Behavior Settings in Personal Networks, *Psychosocial Intervention* (2018). [DOI: 10.5093/pi2018a3](https://doi.org/10.5093/pi2018a3)

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