



The Issues

Upon arrival to Ollantaytambo, we felt that the vast majority of issues in the community we were hoping to serve fell upon financial exclusion on the basis of sex. While this is entirely true, we learned so much more about the culturally engrained problems facing this community day-to-day on the ground.

Domestic violence plagues communities across the world but is especially prevalent in the villages surrounding Ollantaytambo. When the women receive pay checks, they may be pressured to hand that money over to their husbands - who in turn use that money to buy alcohol, leading to violence in the household. When volunteering with Awamaki, we often had conversations of how we can better serve this community knowing the issues stem deeper than just financial literacy and educational exclusion.

The Community

Across the world, women are disproportionately denied the basic education and economic opportunities necessary to be financially independent. However, income inequality persists at a greater rate than any other region in the world in Latin America. Although women maintain the cultural responsibility to manage household budgets in Latin America, these same women on average have lower levels of financial education than their male counterparts.

It was not until we were on the ground that we began to truly comprehend the economic and educational isolation of these women. For many, the only resources presently available to them were food and water; to go to school, to sell products to tourists, or for medical attention, they would need to walk to the closest town which is often hours away on foot.

Beyond this, women in these communities primarily speak their native language Quechua which makes it difficult for them to sell their art to tourists who do not speak the native language and/or speak very little Spanish, further complicating how these communities can operate without Awamaki. Throughout our project and our presentation, we explored what it means to be sustainable and how an organization like Awamaki can best support its community.



The Organization

Located in Ollantaytambo, Peru, Awamaki was founded based on the foundational Awamaki, a Peruvian Asociación Civil and a U.S. 501(c)(3) non-profit, was founded in 2009 by Kennedy Leavens and Miguel Galdo after a preexisting cooperative closed its doors, leaving 10 Peruvian Artisans without the resources necessary to continue their journey towards financial independence.

*Investing in Women.
Sustainable Tourism.
Honoring Culture.*

Awamaki works with an average of 180 indigenous women per year. Some women weave, while others work in tourism, while others collect raw materials. Roles within this organization are dictated by what talents and abilities the women already have. Awamaki has greatly struggled during the pandemic and current political instability as they largely rely on their in-person store to support their organization and the artisan work.



Overcoming Project Complications

This project was an ongoing story of 'high high's and low low's'. From the very beginning, we ran into a wall of issues internally with the Awamaki staff, dealing with the power struggles of having an American CEO in Seattle commanding a crew of on-site employees in rural Peru. Furthermore, as volunteers, it was often deemed that intel was not to be shared with us which lead to communication conflict, and a severe lack of motivation to help what at times we thought was a non-beneficial endeavor.

Through all of the ups and downs, we are beyond grateful to have had the opportunity to pursue this project and for the outpour of support we received from our class and the ISP team. This project was an incredible growth and learning experience and provided time for reflection about what sustainable service truly means. That being said, this project had more than its fair share of hardships, bad days and evenings in the clinic.

This project was far from what we expected, but allowed us to learn in a way that was more impactful than anything either of us have ever experienced. We wouldn't change a thing.



Scholar Impact

Prior to our arrival on the ground, our final deliverable for this project was going to be a comprehensive marketing guidebook. The goal was to synthesize advertising and strategic best practices into a concise and digestible central hub. Providing this would lead to both positive short and long-term outcomes, with immediate spikes in visibility and more effective human capital, respectively.

However, as the project progressed, we realized that there were dynamic opportunities to not just polish what already existed, but to embark on a digital transformation, and trail-blaze the organizations online presence in a sustainable fashion.

To begin the digital transformation, data was imperative. Since the formation of Awamaki in 2009, there has been almost zero data harvest which lead to ill-informed strategic decisions. Zac identified this as the top priority and worked in tandem with Emerson to have an Analytics property established within the first week. Once created, Zac completely rebuilt Awamaki's Google Ad operations, making data driven decisions to optimize their \$10,000 online marketing budget. Since being activated in late July, this new strategy has brought in more revenue than the previous 3 years combined.

Emerson created a guide to understanding how to use Awamaki's customer resource management service, MailChimp, to decrease the onboarding time for new volunteers. She worked to create a short introduction to marketing Awamaki, that outlined what cultural appropriation looks like, using empathy when working with a new community, asking for informed consent when using their stories, and more. Emerson also restructured product release dates to increase online sales given that current political situations in Peru have decreased in-person foot traffic.

Emerson and Zac have also spent time in the Andean communities getting to know the women and their artisanship. This experience allowed them to see first-hand the struggles these women face each day, which thoroughly informed their service.

Context and Connection

Discounting sex, in a survey conducted to assess access to financial education, Peru ranks sixth out of seven Latin American countries. Financial education resources cripple even further when simply considering women; 67% of rural indigenous Peruvian women have zero income and even more are unaware that women are even allowed to earn wages. Despite remaining unpaid for their labors, rural indigenous Peruvian women tend to work 12 more hours per week than their male counterparts. Emerson and Zac's goal was to maximize the income that these women are finally able to generate on their path to financial freedom.

Having women be cornerstone role models in our lives, Awamaki's mission resonated with us at a fundamental level. Awamaki's unique drive to both economically and socially empower women who have historically been shackled by the constraints of society allows our service to be cyclical, being the case that these newly empowered women will go on to be cornerstone role models in several other lives.

