

INDUSTRIALES

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT 15

COMPLETED
JUNE 2011



BEFORE



AFTER

MEET ELKA --a 25 year old woman living in a small green house in the rocky hills of Pamplona Alta, miles outside of Lima's metropolitan center. She shares her two-room home with her grandmother, grandfather, mother, and two young children.

Elka became a MEDLIFE patient in 2010 after she attended our first ever "mega" health campaign -- a joint effort between MEDLIFE, the Peruvian Ministry of Health, the local government, and other local NGOs to bring basic health services to communities in need.

For three long years after the birth of her first child, Elka had ignored a number of vaginal symptoms. She ignored her pain and hesitant curiosity, and tried to convince herself that nothing was wrong. But when she heard through a neighbor about the chance to receive a free Pap smear, she took action and visited a gynecologist at our clinic. Her fears were confirmed when she received the results of her Pap smear 15 days later; they showed significant vaginal infection but did not specify the exact cause.

MEDLIFE's Project Director Carlos Benavides began visiting Elka at her home in order to help coordinate her follow-up

treatment. During these visits, he noticed how difficult it was to navigate the terrain in her community and saw Elka's family struggling to climb up to and down from their home.

At the time, Elka told us that she had been living in these conditions for over ten years. She had discussed with her neighbors several times the need to make community improvements, but their economic difficulties prevented them from accomplishing any changes.

In the four months that followed, MEDLIFE staff accompanied Elka to the hospital for a total of 12 follow-up visits. The results of a biopsy she received showed abnormal cell growth, likely associated with HPV (Human Papillomavirus). Elka's treatment involved various medications, followed by a surgical LEEP procedure that successfully removed the abnormal tissue from her cervix. Though her insurance covered the cost of her hospital visits, she was required to pay for both the medicine and expense of her operation. Elka emphasized that without the support of MEDLIFE, she would not have been able to afford these added costs.

Later, in June 2011, a group of Mobile Clinic students joined the residents of Elka's community of Industriales to build their first staircase. Now, many months later, Elka is healthy. She goes in for a Pap smear every 6 months to ensure her cervical health. She openly recommends Pap smears to other women in her community, convincing them not to be afraid by sharing her own experience. She is grateful for the assistance she received, not only regarding her personal health, but also for the construction of stairs in her community -- a project that improved the quality of life for her entire neighborhood.