

Nuñoa Project Supports Yarn Spinning Group

High Andean communities have long had a tradition of rich textile production. Nuñoa with the greatest density of camelids on the *altiplano* is well known for its fine weaving tradition making everything from colorful potato sacks and blankets to elaborately designed belts and shawls. The latter are frequently made as gifts for baptisms and weddings and can take up to several months to complete.

The process begins with the communal shearing of sheep alpacas and llamas, sorting the fiber by quality, washing it in a nearby stream, carting, and then spinning it into yarn. All ages and genders from 12 years upward participate in spinning using a simple spindle whorl. It is common to encounter someone walking a trail and/or conversing while the whorl rhythmically twirling up and down. Once the yarn is prepared sheep wool is woven into utilitarian garments by men using a



homemade upright loom. The tougher llama fiber goes into ropes and sacks, and alpaca into quality fabrics. This is made by women on a ground loom laid out by four stakes.

Most weaving takes place in the dry season when children are

put in charge of the herding allowing their parents to stay at home working the looms.

In recent years there has been a decline in household weaving as plastic bags have replaced the beautiful striped sacks and market bought clothing has attracted young and old alike. At the same time fashionable alpaca garments from Peru are attracting world attention. In an effort get in on this trend a group of weavers has formed Alpaca Nuñoa that is producing some elegant items sold in Cuzco and Lima. One of their main problems, however, is obtaining sufficient a high quality yarn.

Whereas most herding families practice yarn making their product lacks uniformity and quality control. To address this constraint a group of spinners has recently been formed in town that will provide a superior product not only to the local weavers but to the



regional market with plans to export it internationally. The group is made up of about 30 women with plans to grow to 70. They are predominately from lower socioeconomic levels.

Seeing the potential of this group to form a sound enterprise -- where local fiber is converted into product for another local



enterprise and made by local women – the Nuñoa Project is facilitating their efforts with a \$5000 grant to buy basic equipment.

In assisting the spinning

group to get started we hope open up opportunities for poorer women who traditionally get paid half of men for similar tasks. Many of these women are from single headed households and their salaries will go directly into improving the quality of life for their children. Thus there is a multiplier effect from their employment. We extend best wishes to the spinning group and will monitor their progress.

There are people in the US associated with the NP who design and market alpaca products and they can be of value in marketing Nuñoa products. For more information or if you can assist please contact us.