



## **“Shaken but not Stirred”**

**Five Talents**  
Fighting Poverty, Creating Jobs, Transforming Lives

News from Erik Josephson:  
volunteering with Five Talents in Lima, Peru

Earthquake 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007, measuring 8.0 on Richter scale.

“It was my first earthquake. In the first seconds it seemed a large vehicle was driving past our office building. The more the office shook, the more the realisation dawned that the earth was moving under our feet and the walls and ceiling around our heads. My colleagues and I rushed out into the street, to find that our neighbours had done the same. Some were wailing uncontrollably. Night had already fallen (the earthquake hit at twenty to seven in the evening) and many lights went out and lightning struck. The fear in people’s hearts amplified as many devoutly Catholic Peruvians instinctively attached great significance to the events.

Mobile and landline networks were quickly overwhelmed. Twenty minutes went by before colleagues were able to get in touch with loved ones. Older colleagues were saying it was the strongest and most protracted tremor they had ever felt in Lima. (In 1970 an earthquake killed an estimated 50,000 people in Yungay, to the north of Lima.) Getting home that night proved difficult. Traffic was clogged up and queues were forming at public payphones as people struggled to contact family around the country. Initial panic had evolved into controlled tension. Back at my apartment building, few wanted to return to their abodes for fear of aftershocks.

The first tremor is always the worst I told myself as I strode up the stairs, outwardly confident, to my eleventh floor home. Various objects had fallen from shelves, the kitchen floor was inexplicably drenched in a pool of water and a patch of shoddy plastering outside the rear door had crumbled to the floor. BBC was broadcasting the magnitude was 7.9 on the Richter scale (now upgraded to 8).

I left the back door open as I dried the kitchen only to see my neighbours on their way out, packed bag in hand, to spend the night with family in a ground floor apartment. My initial fortitude in the face of Mother Nature was starting to slip. The first significant aftershock struck at around eleven twenty, causing me to bolt from my bed, grab my shoes and head for the door. I had no idea if the building was earthquake-resistant. I was taking no chances. The swaying quickly subsided. I didn’t sleep well that night.

The relatively low casualty rate is being revised upwards. Estimates are that more than 500 are dead, mainly in and around Pisco, 100 miles south of Lima. I have yet to hear news of the 1,500 microfinance clients supported by Five Talents in the Lima shanty towns. I expect many of their homes and small businesses will be affected. The poor suffer hardest in times like these. “

*Erik is working with the Five Talents microfinance programme in Lima, which is currently making small loans to around 1,500 people living in shanty towns around the city. He expects to be in Lima until the end of 2007. For more information: email [info@fivetalents.org.uk](mailto:info@fivetalents.org.uk) or call 0845 054 7525.*

To make a donation to our work please visit [www.fivetalents.org.uk](http://www.fivetalents.org.uk)  
Five Talents is a Registered Charity No. 1113969