

## **Blind athlete meets visually impaired children to celebrate National Day on people with disabilities**

**Lima, October 16 2015.-** To celebrate the National Day on people with disabilities, the National Council for the integration of people with disabilities (CONADIS, for its Spanish acronym) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) organized a meeting between US athlete Dan Berlin – the first blind athlete to finish the Inca Trek trail in one day, which he accomplished this week at Cusco – and the children of Luis Braille school.

The school is one of the 15 education institutions in Peru for children and adolescents with visual imparity. The meeting was carried out to motivate students to pursue their personal objectives and dreams.

Dan Berlin fought against many limitations after progressively losing his sight during a 20-year period. Instead of lamenting his situation, he opted to face this challenge and became a marathon runner.

Berlin has run nine marathons so far, including the renowned New York and Boston marathons; finished two triathlons; and recently completed two personal goals: he crossed through the Grand Canyon (USA) in 2014; and he finished the Inca Trail in Cusco this week (Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>) in just one day!

With these feats, Berlin has become the first blind athlete doing both and in the process, he has overcome his visual imparity, turning it into an opportunity for new sporting challenges. He was looking forward to share his life experience to children from Braille school, for them and their families to pursue a fulfilling life, become self-sufficient and actively participate in their communities.

### **Development opportunities**

During the event, Carla Valla, from UNICEF, stated that Dan is a role model for people with disabilities. “His message is to focus on the things that we can do instead of those we cannot control, and that is a powerful message because it gives his audience hope to overcome

and succeed over personal challenges”. She outlined that the many limitations faced by children with disabilities are a violation of their rights and the principle of equality, closely related to the dignity and rights children should enjoy everywhere.

Valla recalled the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how it addresses children with disabilities guaranteeing them with the right to access quality education, health services, rehabilitation, for them to achieve social inclusion and personal development. She congratulated CONADIS and institutions such as Braille school on their unrelent and daily efforts to offer a quality education for children with disabilities. She further added that this activity highlights the importance of giving equal opportunities for all children.

CONADIS Secretary General evoked the National Day for people with disabilities (October 16<sup>th</sup>) and informed the audience that in Peru about 5,2% of the population live with a disability. Therefore, it is crucial to undertake necessary measures to provide accessible transport, technical help, communications, sports, culture and leisure; all of these to ensure the full integration of people with disabilities on the society and the economy of the country.

“Society needs to become more aware of the rights, needs and opportunities people with disabilities have”, expressed the Secretary General.

**Key Data:**

- There are 15 Special Basic Education Specialized Centers (CEBE, for its acronym in Spanish) in Peru.
- Dan Berlin is a US athlete who has run multiple marathons and triathlons along his team to raise money for charities.
- The Inca Trail is a 40km trail going through the Andes, with altitudes between 2,700 and 4,200 meters above the sea level.

You can watch a video from Dan Berlin and his team in

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xMhC\\_074JM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xMhC_074JM)

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