



World Monuments Fund's Crisis Response Program to Support the Restoration of One of Peru's Oldest Churches Destroyed by Recent Earthquake

Responding to an urgent request from Peru's Ministry of Culture, WMF will help restore the historic La Jalca Grande Church and Tower

NEW YORK, NY, January 13, 2022—World Monuments Fund (WMF) announced today more than \$20,000 to support crisis response and restoration efforts in the historic town of La Jalca Grande, Peru, following a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that struck the region on November 28, 2021. The earthquake severely damaged La Jalca Grande's local church—one of the first built in the northeast of Peru—and destroyed its freestanding tower.

The Church of La Jalca Grande and its tower were built in 1538, a few years after the Spanish conquest. The structures were built using stone from ancient pre-Hispanic buildings, and the interior and exterior walls display geometric figures with zigzag designs that were inspired by Kuélap, Óllape, and Laguna de los Cóndores, archaeological sites from the Chachapoyas civilization. The church also features extraordinary baroque altarpieces that feature both Catholic and Chachapoyan symbolism. In all of these ways, the church connects the history and identity of the La Jalca Grande population with the ancient traditions of the Chachapoyas.

In response to the November earthquake, the Peruvian Ministry of Culture requested help from WMF through its Crisis Response Program, which seeks to provide critical support to communities to protect and restore their irreplaceable cultural places in the aftermath of natural disaster, conflict, and other disruptive events. WMF recognized that the extent of the damage and the importance of the church to the local community and Peruvian history necessitated an immediate intervention.

“For more than 55 years, World Monuments Fund has worked to safeguard communities and restore the treasured places that define their values following natural disasters,” said **Bénédicte de Montlaur**, President and CEO, World Monuments Fund. “Through our Crisis Response Program, we are very proud to

support the efforts of Peru's Ministry of Culture. We hope that our efforts will encourage local matching funds and result in a swift reconstruction so that the people of La Jalca Grande can return to their beloved church.”

The destructive impact of the earthquake on the church and tower calls for a highly specialized intervention. The tower, which survives only as rubble, requires immediate action to recover the structure by reassembling the fallen elements. The remaining fragments offer sufficient information to allow for a complete recovery of the unique architectural design, the rough and irregular texture of its surfaces, and the whitewash. Additionally, a stone block known as the Juan el Osito” will be returned to its original location. According to local belief, the stone represents Juan el Osito, the tower's builder, and is an important symbol to the local community.

The restoration work will extend to the church itself, with an emergency plan to stabilize cracks, stop settlement, and address other conditions. Current weather patterns exacerbate the need for preventive measures that will protect the structure. Possible further actions could include reinforcement of the rood, releveling of the sloping floors, and the comprehensive conservation of the high altar.

###

About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society

Media Contact

Judith Walker, Vice President of Communications, World Monuments Fund,
jwalker@wmf.org