



Saint Josemaria Escriva

Founder of Opus Dei

[Home](#) - [Projects from around the world](#) - Condoray Women's Training Center

Condoray Women's Training Center

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In July 1974, Saint Josemaría Escrivá was in Peru, in the Cañete Valley, where he had several informal meetings and get-togethers with people who worked on the land there.

Condoray had been open since 1963. It is a women's training center situated 145 km from Lima, whose goal is to train people who can then stimulate development among other Cañete Valley families. In Condoray Saint Josemaría told them, among other things, «We have to work joyfully, enthusiastically. You can do that, partly because you are earning money and raising your family; but especially to please God, because work is prayer, work dignifies the worker.»

Education for sustainable development

Cañete Valley's main source of income is agriculture. 71.6% of the homes have less than the minimal hygiene facilities. Life for the inhabitants of the valley is tough; and it quite often happens that a very young girl finds herself saddled with the responsibility of supporting the family, bringing up younger siblings, and caring for her elders. Such girls and women usually get no opportunity for employment training. Although 40% of the working population are female only 9% receive decent wages, because of their unskilled status.

For all these reasons Condoray's main objective is the improvement of women agricultural workers, in the human, social and spiritual spheres. Condoray offers all-round training aimed at integrated and progressive development, as well as helping these women to discover the value of their own lives and the work they do.

To achieve this aim Condoray runs many different courses and programs for women who can become trainers in their own villages. These courses include basic literacy, child-rearing, basic employment training, nutrition, hygiene and primary health care, health education and children's nutrition. It also offers

three-year technical training courses for young girls: executive secretarial skills, hotel management and accountancy.

Village Trainers

The village trainers are basic to Condoray's approach. They are village women who undergo personalized training courses and then go back to help other women in their turn to achieve goals in their families, their education and their social surroundings. The work of the village trainers means that stable development programs can be put in place, tailored to the needs of each village. This means that the social work which is done in Condoray itself can multiply over and over again. At present 56 village trainers are working in 18 settlements in the Cañete Valley.

Village trainers have also been the force behind a major change in Cañete Valley's social system. Traditionally, women never took part in community affairs and had no say in decision-making. Now women have taken on leading roles in their villages and have helped other women in turn to improve their family life, social life and education. Women have set up village halls, sewing workshops, community kitchens, parks, children's playgrounds, family allotments, and much more.

More than twenty thousand women who work on the land have come from their villages to take part in the different programs of rural development, and more than seven thousand girls have followed practical training courses or further training, and gone on to work in local firms or set up their own businesses.

For further information see: www.condoray.edu.pe