

Lima Youth Action: enhancing youth participation in local governance

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| Region | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| Award Scheme | Shanghai Manual |
| Themes | Climate Change Local Govts & decentralization Urban Governance and Legal Frameworks Youth & Livelihoods |
| Sustainable Development Goals | Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable |

Summary

Lima Joven Acciona (Action of Youth in Lima) reflects a pioneering initiative aimed at enhancing youth participation in local governance in Lima. The city accommodates a young demographic, however faces limited engagement of young people within municipal decision-making.

Background and Objective

Peru has a notably young population, with individuals between the ages of 15–19 constituting a significant proportion of the national demographic. Lima, as the capital and home to nearly 10 million residents, houses approximately a third of this youth population. Historically, youth participation in local governance was virtually non-existent, with only two youth organizations formally acknowledged before 2019, both operating on a voluntary basis. Recognizing this critical gap, the Lima Joven Acciona program was initiated in January 2019 to empower young urban citizens, amplify their voices in political and civic affairs, and create institutional pathways for their involvement in governance. The program is structured around four strategic pillars: education, empowerment, social action, and the creation of participatory spaces. By leveraging education as a transformative tool, the initiative aimed to enhance leadership skills, provide public speaking training, and support youth-led projects. The overarching objective was to institutionalize youth participation in decision-making processes, ensuring that their contributions were formally recognized and integrated into municipal governance.

Actions and Implementation

The implementation of Lima Joven Acciona involved the establishment of institutional spaces dedicated to youth participation. The city adopted a three-pronged approach centred on intergenerational dynamics, full participation, and interdisciplinary action. Recognizing young people as agents of social change, the initiative sought to empower them to address urban challenges, not just for themselves but for the broader community. Strategic alliances were formed with local communities, social organizations, universities, and

NGOs to enhance the initiative's reach and impact.

Four key institutional spaces were created to enable youth participation. The Network of Young Leaders of Metropolitan Lima was established to mobilize unorganized youth and strengthen their leadership capabilities. The Metropolitan Network for Youth Organizations, the first virtual platform of its kind in Lima, provided visibility to youth organizations and facilitated networking with public and private institutions. The Youth Participation District Council of Lima Cercado was formed to serve as a representative forum, allowing youth organizations to design community projects and propose solutions to urban challenges. Finally, the Metropolitan System for the Promotion and Management of Youth Policies, initially established in 2002, was reactivated to coordinate efforts between youth organizations, municipal bodies, and other stakeholders. By 2020, these efforts resulted in increased engagement, with improved coordination and execution of youth-driven initiatives across the city.

Outcomes and Impacts

The impact of Lima Joven Acciona has been substantial, fostering youth participation in governance and increasing their representation in decision-making processes. The initiative has trained over 3,000 young people in leadership, public speaking, and organizational skills. Additionally, it has engaged 2,253 young individuals in debates and dialogue forums, strengthened 56 strategic alliances, and facilitated the development of 108 youth-led community projects. The number of recognized urban youth organizations in Lima has grown significantly, with 321 active groups comprising 3,040 youth members. Young people have also contributed to broader policy frameworks, participating in knowledge exchange processes that informed the Local Plan for Climate Change of the Province of Lima 2021–2030. This level of engagement underscores the program's success in integrating youth perspectives into urban planning and climate resilience strategies. Furthermore, the initiative has led to enhanced civic responsibility among young citizens, demonstrating their capacity to drive meaningful change within their communities.

Sustainability and Scalability

Lima Joven Acciona was designed with sustainability in mind, ensuring long-term youth engagement through institutionalized mechanisms. The formal recognition of youth organizations and participatory councils guarantees the continuity of youth-led governance initiatives. The program's approach—centred on strategic partnerships, formalized policies, and youth leadership development—provides a scalable model that can be adapted in other urban contexts. By embedding youth participation in municipal governance structures and linking it to national policies such as Peru's National Bicentennial Plan and the National Youth Policy, the initiative ensures alignment with broader development goals, further reinforcing its longevity.

Gender and Social Inclusivity

A fundamental aspect of Lima Joven Acciona is its emphasis on inclusivity, ensuring that young people from diverse backgrounds, including marginalized and underrepresented groups, have access to governance spaces. The program incorporates disaggregated data collection, tracking participation by gender, district, educational level, and occupation to ensure equitable representation. Efforts have been made to promote gender equality, particularly by encouraging young women to take on leadership roles. Additionally, the program fosters intersectional inclusivity by engaging youth from various socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring that their perspectives and experiences shape urban development policies.

Innovative Initiative

Lima Joven Acciona represents a groundbreaking model for integrating youth into municipal governance. By creating dedicated institutional spaces, the program has transformed young people from passive recipients of policy decisions into active contributors. The Metropolitan Youth Strategy, developed through participatory consultations, further institutionalizes youth involvement, embedding their voices into long-term urban planning. The initiative's use of digital tools, such as the Metropolitan Network for Youth Organizations, underscores its innovative approach to enhancing civic engagement. This model demonstrates how cities can leverage technology and structured governance frameworks to promote youth-driven urban transformation.

Resources devoted to delivery

The success of Lima Joven Acciona has been supported by extensive resource mobilization, involving collaboration between municipal bodies, NGOs, universities, and private sector partners. The city government allocated financial and technical resources to establish and sustain the program's institutional spaces. Additionally, independent professionals and civil society organizations contributed expertise and mentorship through training sessions and workshops. A rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework was established, tracking key performance indicators such as youth engagement rates, leadership training participation, and project implementation outcomes. This systematic approach ensured accountability and maximized the program's effectiveness.

Conclusion

Lima Joven Acciona exemplifies a transformative approach to youth participation in urban governance. By institutionalizing youth engagement, fostering leadership development, and embedding youth perspectives into policy frameworks, the initiative has successfully revitalized civic participation among young people in Lima. Its structured, multi-faceted approach has not only empowered young citizens but also strengthened governance systems by incorporating diverse voices into decision-making processes. As a

scalable and replicable model, Lima Joven Acciona offers valuable insights for other cities seeking to integrate youth into local governance, demonstrating that investing in young people is a strategic imperative for sustainable urban development.