



Group work involving youth activists and experts is a central part of the youth LABs. Photo: Sophie Blais

STRENGTHENING YOUTH ACTIVISM TO TACKLE INEQUALITY

Supporting and Co-Creating Strategies with the New Generation of Youth Activists in Peru

The Youth Mobilisation and Active Citizenship in Sustainable Economic Growth and Food Security Programme is a multi-country initiative delivered by Oxfam Quebec in Benin, Bolivia and Peru. The programme seeks to strengthen youth activism to tackle inequality, and forms part of the Innovation Development Fund. It is based on the principles of co-creation and working in partnership with youth.

This case study focuses on the experiences from the Actúa.pe project in Peru, a capacity-building intervention which seeks to accumulate knowledge and practices within a group of activists (based primarily in Lima) so that they can create a multiplier effect with other young people (both in Lima and other regions of Peru).

Oxfam's broader programme provides support for the project and creates an enabling environment where staff and youth activists can feel confident in testing ideas and exploring different ways of working.

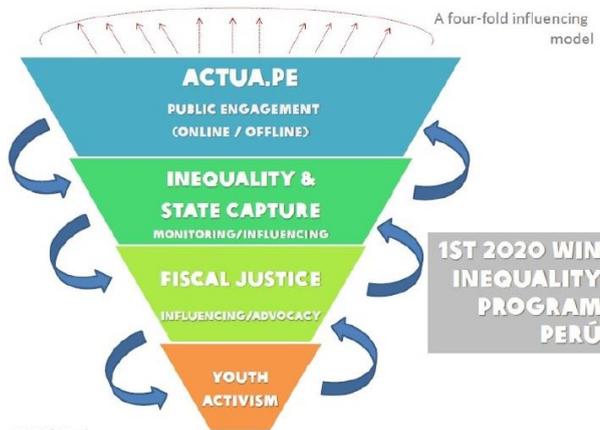
Youth participation approaches

Involving activist allies from the start: From the outset, allies were involved in a series of meetings and planning activities including stakeholder mapping and analysis, context analysis and assessment of project partners. This enabled a co-creative approach where all parties worked together to define the objectives, outputs, strategic development and project design.

Engaging with diverse allies: It was important to reach out to and engage with experts and allies across a range of different themes linked to inequality, so that the project approach was relevant to and representative of the communities it was working in. Allies included academics, directors of civil society organizations, government representatives, lawyers, trade unionists, journalists, investigators, alternative media outlets and online influencers.



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A four-fold influencing model. Actua.pe is part of a larger intervention strategy for Oxfam in Peru. 2017/P&C Peru

Horizontal structure: The goal was to work in a way that respected the autonomy of the actors involved, especially young people. This meant employing a non-hierarchical, horizontal structure, and valuing teamwork and collaboration over hierarchy and authority.

Executing Committee*: In the first phase of the project (until August 2018), every aspect of the project was driven, co-created and co-delivered by an Executing Committee which comprised of four youth activist groups (two representatives per youth activist group) and Oxfam, as follows:

- *Pazos:* A neighbourhood collective (Villa El Salvador) that uses art to educate children and young people in the themes of gender, employment and the environment.
- *TierrActiva:* A network that seeks to strengthen the climate change movement by mobilising different groups and people and organising collective actions for systemic change.
- *Foro Juvenil de Izquierda:* A group of young people from a range of social backgrounds who engage in political activism by critically examining issues that affect society. The group works with universities, unions, neighbourhoods and women's movements.
- *Kawsaypaq:* A group that carries out projects and activities using various communication and audio-visual tools to generate spaces for exchange, reflection and action that connect young people to their social environment and culture.
- *Oxfam in Peru:* Oxfam in Peru's three country objectives are around active citizenship against inequality; territorial land rights and extractive industries; and humanitarian aid.

The Executing Committee played a key role in

creating and organising the 'LABs' – training and articulation spaces for activists and experts – defining the LAB content, convening participants and lecturers, creating the methodologies, and facilitating the LABs. Committee members were also in charge of communications, undertook the project Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL), received proposals and applications for funding, and helped to manage and execute the budget. **The project is now in its second phase with new members of the Executing Committee.*

National and Local LABs: Each Local LAB was attended by 20–40 young people, all of whom were youth leaders, including feminists, ecologists, communicators, university students, and young people from cultural and artistic initiatives.

A larger National LAB was also held, bringing together urban and rural activists from across Peru to enable exchange, cross-learning and capacity building of young people nationally.

At the Local and National LABs, the youth participants developed their knowledge and skills and interacted with local development actors and civil society organisations on various issues relating to inequality, strengthening the young people's agendas and capacity as activists. LABs enabled the young people to analyse and better understand the various components of the inequality they wanted to tackle, then to co-construct their position and the arguments they would use following the LABs.

Capacity building for Executing Committee youth members:

This included organisational capacity building such as administration, financial management and information management, as well as practical training in communication, use of digital technologies, audio-visual tools, facilitation, content management and LAB execution.

Funding for youth activists to replicate LABs:

A \$500 to \$750 fund for youth initiatives was available to activists who participated in the LABs and wanted to replicate the contents, methodologies or tools. This fostered a sharing and learning environment where young people could take the experience and knowledge gained from participating in a LAB and pass it on to other young people.

Mobile desk space: On a rotating basis, an activist from one of the youth groups in the Executing Committee would work in the Oxfam office one day a week (during one month) to organise the LABs: preparing materials and content, contacting participants, coordinating the venue and catering, and liaising with speakers and experts.



Key youth participation successes

Constant mentoring for Executing Committee members: A local expert took on the role of mentor; in this case, the author and researcher Rocío Silva Santisteban. She helped to prepare the young activists and Oxfam staff from the Executing Committee for each LAB, providing support with content development and helping them to analyse dominant narratives (e.g. popular conservative trends). This enabled the Executing Committee to prepare questions for discussion and debate amongst the youth participants and civil society actors during the LABs.

Rocío Silva Santisteban has a long history of activism, including involvement in social movements and working with civil society actors; with this knowledge and experience, she enabled the Executing Committee to reach a deeper level of analysis and adapt their methodologies to achieve the best possible results from the LABs.

Co-creative approach to evaluation: MEL was built into the project design and co-developed by the youth activists in the Executing Committee. This included MEL tools and indicators, and baseline data analysis. A MEL working group was set up within the Executing Committee and supported by MEL technical specialists from Oxfam.

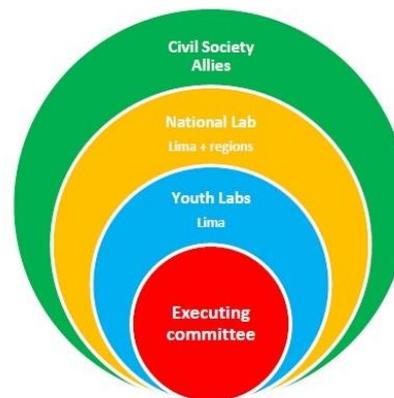
Financial remuneration: The young activists in the Executing Committee received small financial payments. This was available at three points in the process:

1. Administrative/coordination financial support: a monthly payment of \$80 per person (for eight people) was budgeted to recognise their work and time dedicated the project.
2. Facilitation: \$30 per person (for a maximum of eight people) was allocated for facilitation and other roles during the LABs.
3. Mobile desk: A budget of \$185 for one person, one day a week for one month, was allocated to help with the logistical preparation for the LABs.

The youth activists involved in the LABs gained experience far beyond 'reactionary activism' (such as taking part in protests) by working on a longer-term project. They also benefitted from working with Oxfam and learning new skills such as managing, organising and implementing budgets, preparing logistics, organising youth activists and learning how to collaborate with allies – all of which supported their development as activists and influencers.

Lessons for others

Build strategic links: The Actúa.pe project provided a strategic way to connect Oxfam Quebec's technical advisers to Oxfam in Peru, while also connecting them with young civil society actors who were in need of capacity-building support.



Actors involved in Actua.pe

Invest in the co-creative process: Beyond being a buzzword, co-creation is really at the heart of working with young people effectively and meaningfully. In this project, co-creation was combined with a horizontal structure and a flexible approach to working with the project's autonomous activist allies. Young people were involved in each phase of the project and were accompanied by various Oxfam advisors, who were supportive and able to adapt processes to suit the young people's needs, priorities and agendas.

Have a clear exit strategy: Planned into the project from the start, the transition toward the exit strategy began during the project's second phase, where two out of the four activist groups in the Executing Committee formed a *new* Executing Committee. This allowed for sustainability, retention of institutional memory and training for the new members, with little support needed from Oxfam. The two activist groups that left the Executing Committee moved on to implement other initiatives and activities which spread the methodologies, tools and knowledge gained from their work on the LABs.

This case study forms part of a series of case studies exploring how to go from programmes developed *for* young people, to working *with* them and on projects led *by* them.

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For further information on the issues raised in this case study please email alejandra.alayza@oxfam.org (Program Manager, Oxfam in Peru), IDavies@oxfam.org.uk, Christian.Tremblay@oxfam.org, or Robbert.vandeWaerdt@oxfamnovib.nl.



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