



YOUTH ACTIVISM AGAINST INEQUALITIES

Oxfam Case Study

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A CASE STUDY FROM OXAM – MAY 2020

This case study highlights the scope and the lessons learned from the youth advocacy model promoted by Oxfam in Peru as part of two projects: "School: from Protest to Proposal" of the Left Youth Forum (FJI) and "Youth 2018-19" of the Interquorum Network (Red IQ). These projects provide exciting insights into the importance of changing the debate's terms by incorporating youth voices. These projects have also contributed to developing youth activism and creating alliances aimed at influencing decision-makers in Peru.

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Cover picture: Young participants of the Regional Meeting of the Youth of Piura: "Leadership and youth advocacy for sustainable development." October 2019.
Credit: Marlon Vlademir Palacios Núñez

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1 GENERAL FRAMEWORK

In Peru, 40% of the population is vulnerable¹, which means that 12 million people are at risk of falling back into poverty. The majority of young people belong to this group. Despite the country's economic performance over the last two decades (between 2007 and 2018, GDP grew by an average of 5.1 %²), some development indicators still require significant improvements. For example, in Peru, "7 out of 10 people who work do so in the informal sector and are deprived of any social protection³". Young people between 15 and 24 years of age who are about to enter the labour market face increased difficulties. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Information (INEI), "one and a half million young people who work do not earn enough to access proper nutrition⁴". This percentage (34% of young people) contrasts with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of almost 20%, which places Peruvian youth at the bottom of the list in Latin America and the Caribbean⁵. Among young people, women are the most affected, as they are often paid less than men⁶, and therefore find themselves below the poverty line. In this context, the OECD considers that "Peru should now focus on improving employment opportunities for underqualified young people, especially indigenous and Afro-Peruvian girls and boys⁷."

"Many people earn less than 930 soles (the monthly minimum wage), and although formally employed, they are not covered by labour law, receive no compensation for length of service, and have no holidays."

Michell López, 23, Red Interquorum Arequipa, coordinator of the project "Youth 2018-19" in Arequipa

2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As part of the Program ACCES Innovation (PAI), two of Oxfam's partners in Peru, the Left Youth Forum (FJI) and the Interquorum Network (Red IQ), have developed their projects based on the reality of youth employment.

As part of the "School: From Protest to Proposal" project (2017-2019), the FJI's goal was to train activists and provide them with tools relating to economic justice and the development of dignified work opportunities for young people. Throughout the process, project participants developed proposals and carried out actions to convince decision-makers to act on the economic inequalities that mainly affect Peruvian youth.

The IQ network has launched the "Youth 2018-19" project, which aims to propose, promote, and defend youth-friendly policies to local and regional authorities. This project is being implemented in ten regions of Peru⁸; the young members of the IQ network have been trained on different topics.

In the local and regional elections, the young people who participated in the IQ Network project carried out dialogue and advocacy with candidates to ensure that policies promoting the employability of young people are considered a priority in their future mandates.

The youth activism laboratories of the [Actúa.pe platform](https://actua.pe) have been set up thanks to the "Mobilization and active participation of young people facing inequalities" project. The IQ network and the FJI have created a space for articulation, training, and co-creation to strengthen their projects and broaden their scope.

These three youth initiatives in youth civic participation have reached 1078 women and 875 men 15 and 30 years of age from twenty-two regions of Peru.



Interquorum National-International's meeting, november of 2018. Photo: Carlos Álvalos.

3 OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate that the actions carried out by young participants in active citizenship projects are essential in influencing decision-makers on dignified jobs and economic policies.
- To highlight the scope and impact of this model of youth advocacy promoted by Oxfam in Peru, in projects designed and implemented by and for young activists.

4 CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The methodology consisted of reconstructing the experiences to identify the critical elements of the working model for promoting the rights of young people and the factors that contributed to the results, using a participatory approach based on the following elements:

- Document review (project reports, including interviews with politicians, activists, etc.).
- Interviews and focus groups with young project participants and key people (coordinators, facilitators, etc.).
- Visits to the project intervention areas to collect testimonies from participants.
- In total, statements were collected from twenty-seven people from thirteen of the twenty-two intervention areas.

5 WORK MODEL

Components of the work model used with the youth activists

1. Strengthening activism

- To share information and tools for action to consolidate youth organizations.
- To move from social to political activism.

2. Intersectionality⁹ and intersectorality¹⁰ of topics and actions

- To reach consensus by integrating the importance of intersectionality and intersectorality in the development and selection of topics and activities with partner organizations.
- To analyze, study, and debate a topic with other organizations and groups and create an organizational process built on differences.

3. Articulation (organizations, knowledge, and alliances)

- To have a networking system for working with other agencies: articulating programs, building alliances, and institutional relationships.
- To approach a problem not only from the logic of the organization leading the process but also the visions and approaches of allied organizations.

4. Collective development of proposals based on a gender equality approach

- To channel collectively designed proposals to address inequalities through political participation.
- To encourage participation and train organizations and groups to address issues from a gender perspective: representation of the participants, governance of leadership and decision-making spaces, dissemination of differentiated data, and change of imaginary.

5. Online and offline actions designed to influence decision-making bodies.

- To massively increase online actions and complement them offline with strategies based on media and social networks.

6. Facilitating spaces for interaction with decision-making bodies

- To organize seminars, debates, forums, and conferences to enable young people to discuss and have a direct influence on decision-making bodies.

6 MAIN RESULTS

Changing the terms of the debate by including the voice of youth

These actions have allowed young people and decision-makers to interact in a way that was previously impossible and provided the young participants with the ability to influence several decision-makers directly.

The participants of the School were invited to join in a technical roundtable on the "issue relating to youth employment" organized by the Labour and Social Security Commission of the Congress of the Republic. A diagnosis of youth

employment was presented in a series of meetings, together with proposals for dignified employment. And, as this was the first time an organization of young activists was invited to discuss with such a high-level body, a precedent was set on how to work on policy development with the direct participation of the population.

Another outcome of the project was the invitation by the National Council for Labour and Employment Promotion to young people to participate with other stakeholders in the development of new regulations on youth employment that the Ministry of Labour and Promotion of employment intends to push forward.

The following are some examples of proposals by youth organizations:

- Employment stability: to protect working people from arbitrary dismissal and to guarantee minimum conditions for unionization.
- Necessary strengthening of labour inspection: giving the labour inspection organization (Sunafil) powers of investigation and sanction and ensuring increased inspections at the national level.
- Integration of the most vulnerable populations: introduce employability policies aimed at the specified communities, primarily women and LGTBI+ people.

During the election campaign, young people from the IQ Network conducted interviews and discussions with candidates in ten regions. They succeeded in getting several of them to sign the agenda developed as part of the "Youth 2018-19" project. Moreover, by presenting the assessments on education and employment in the different regions, the young people obtained a commitment from the elected officials and civil servants to continue working for the promotion of youth employment.

Thanks to the presence of young people at the working tables and the dialogue opportunities with members of the regional governments, the advocacy and positioning led in Cusco to the launch of the "Youth Promise" program, which is being implemented by Regional Directorate of Labour and Promotion of Employment. The plan is to improve the integration of young people into the labour market through various technical training measures. In Apurimac, young elected officials who were involved in the IQ Network before the elections are now part of the Regional Council for the Promotion of Work and Employment, and they maintain relations with the IQ Network on youth issues. In Piura, the network succeeded in involving the young elected officials in several forums for discussion and preparation of proposals. The relationships established during the election period last over time and demonstrate that the project is sustainable.

"The Regional Director of Labour will meet with youth organizations to present the new "Youth Promise" agenda. At this meeting, we want to address the issue of the integration of university graduates, as they also need help. Fortunately, there is a real opening for further dialogue."

Rolfy Vergara, Interquorum
Cusco Network



Young leaders elected with the members of the youth collective. Regional meeting of the Piura youth led by the IQ network, which in October 2019. Photo: Oxfam.

Building networks of alliances to lobby decision-makers on the issue of dignified employment

One of the main results is the contribution of the two projects to the construction of a social and political fabric made up of organizations, a multi-sectoral, multi-generational, multi-programmatic fabric based on a shared interest subject, namely dignified employment.

Oxfam's dissemination of evidence-based knowledge has increased young people's interest in deepening their understanding of the issues while building their capacity to claim their rights from decision-makers using a proposal rather than a protest approach.



[Video of the National's Activism Laboratory Actúa.pe 2019](#)

“Everywhere we went we talked about articulation, intersectionality, employment, and inequality. We analyzed, studied, and debated. Yes, we were able to integrate the agenda to allow participants to work on the issue in their organizations. This diversity of groups made it possible to put forward a common goal for action. Our agendas may be different, but the issue is one that concerns us all.”

Magaly Voto-Bernales, 30 years old, in charge of the follow-up and assessment of the "School: from protest to proposal."

Increasing, strengthening and reaffirming activism

These projects have enabled young people to create new spaces for reflection and analysis of inequality, dignified employment, and other issues. Moreover, this experience encouraged them to implement new ideas and activities and broaden their field of action and areas of influence.

The young activists strengthened their individual and collective capacities in leadership, advocacy, project management, planning, advocacy, communication, and networking. They have also developed their knowledge and connections with different local, regional, and national social movements.

In the Piura region, young people recognize that the "Youth 2018-19" project and the participation of some of its members in the National Activism Laboratory of Actúa.pe have empowered them to maintain an open and continuing discussion with the employment authorities. They recognize the value created by the strengthening of their capacity to influence, through the training carried out within the project from the [guide to exercising influence](#) produced by the IYF and information from Oxfam publications and other information sources.

7 KEY FACTORS

We have identified the factors that contribute to building and reinforcing the activities, learnings, and achievements of youth organizations in their advocacy actions:

1. Training and information for action

Access to capacity building and relevant strategic information provide young people in these organizations with improved means to interact with authorities in defense of their rights. These tools empower young people and allow them to strengthen the dynamic of arguments and counter-arguments in advocacy and the elaboration of proposals, thus becoming credible actors in the different spaces of discussion and consultation.

2. Promoting leadership based on gender equality

Gender equality in public policies, spaces for dialogue, and social relations are fundamental elements to the co-construction and the elaboration of proposals by the groups. In these groups, equality is sought and promoted. This commitment translates into leadership, governance, and it has an impact on the selection of public speakers and specialists in the fields covered.

3. Issue and design of an advocacy plan

Mastery of analytical tools is fundamental to understanding the problems young people face. These tools make it possible to design an awareness strategy based on a clear understanding of the challenges. Knowing who is in power, who are the allies and the people obstructing initiatives increases the likelihood that young people will make their voices heard and will be able to capitalize on these experiences.

4. Using media and social networks to support action

The communication strategy was backed by the traditional, and particularly by the digital media, and it has significantly contributed to the results. Campaigns and the dissemination of activities have increased their reach and impact.

5. Political impact to stimulate the public engagement of decision-makers

The spaces for dialogue between young people and the officials in charge of regional and national public services made it possible to convert the political "utilization" of young people into an opportunity that led to the signing of the agreement on the youth program. The group's presence made possible the mobilization and expression of political will and public commitments on a platform that was designed to serve the candidates' electoral goals.

"We are now empowered. I have made the issue of employment my mission in our advocacy work with the authorities, and we have managed to establish bridges and work with them. We have not just contributed to constructive criticism, but also by participating in the development of joint proposals."

Hilda Floriano Correa, 24 years old, spokesperson of the Interquorum Piura network

"During the election, we guided the process by providing information on the profiles of candidates and (...) on their backgrounds, and on their lists of councillors."

Natwar Tacuri, Interquorum Moquegua Network



[Video: Political management seminar for young authorities 2019](#)

7 OXFAM AND SUPPORT FOR YOUTH INITIATIVES

At Oxfam in Peru, we have a unique perspective on the diversity of activism of the organizations and groups we work with.

The support of the Oxfam team is expressed in two ways, beginning with the sustained horizontal support provided by the multidisciplinary technical advisory staff. During the implementation of the projects, the members of the technical team were in constant contact with the coordinators for each of the projects in order to discuss and accompany them in the organisational processes and in the different facets of implementation. In order to provide concrete support to the group, it was essential to respect their agenda and respond to the needs expressed by its members.

8 CONCLUSIONS

No single initiative or action that involves young people is marginal or of lesser importance. Their work is a laboratory of possibilities where they test their leadership, advocacy skills, partnership tactics, broad vision of solutions, proposals for change, and a vision of a more inclusive country. We have achieved very positive results by supporting these agendas, co-constructing them, and connecting them with opportunities and proposals that can empower them. As in any other part of the world, young people are the agents of change for achieving a more just and equitable society across generations, genders, and regions. The projects undertaken by youth groups, with Oxfam's support, promote the emergence of new active citizenship and allow for progress towards a more equitable Peru.

“The task of co-construction and working entirely in a horizontal way is not always easy and requires more time and resources. However, the results are more sustainable as they build trust among groups of activists who often and rightly distrust formal organizations, including organizations such as Oxfam, and this hinders opportunities for joint work.”

Francisco Angulo, Youth Participation Advisor, Oxfam Peru

NOTES

¹ Oxfam in Peru (2016) *Five key questions for closing the gaps*. Report. Lima. 16 p. Retrieved from https://cng-cdn.oxfam.org/peru.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/Agenda%20contra%20la%20desigualdad%20Perú_2.pdf

² National Institute of Statistics and Informatics INEI (2019) *Panorama of the Peruvian economy 1950-2019* Lima. 175 p. Retrieved from: https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1654/libro.pdf

³ Ana Paula Franco and Hugo Ñopo (2018) *Being young in Peru: education and work*. Analysis Group for Development. Lima. 74 p. Consulted at: <https://www.grade.org.pe/wp-content/uploads/AI37.pdf>

⁴ Extreme poverty line defined by INEI for the year 2016

⁵ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2020) Newsroom: *Peru should help integrate more vulnerable youth into the labor market* Consulted at <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/el-peru-deberia-contribuir-a-incorporar-un-mayor-numero-de-jovenesvulnerables-al-mercado-laboral.htm>.

⁶ National Institute of Statistics and Information Technology INEI *Women work 9 hours more per week than men*. Institutional mail. Retrieved from: <http://m.inei.gob.pe/prensa/noticias/mujeres-trabajan-9-horas-semanales-mas-que-los-hombres-8291/>

⁷ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2020) Newsroom: *Peru should help integrate more vulnerable youth into the labor market* Consulted at <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/el-peru-deberia-contribuir-a-incorporar-un-mayor-numero-de-jovenesvulnerables-al-mercado-laboral.htm>.

⁸ In Piura, Cajamarca, Cusco, Lambayeque, Moquegua, Apurímac, San Martín, La Libertad, Arequipa and Huanuco.

⁹ Carmen V. Valiña. *Intersectionality: definition and origins*. Blog. Retrieved from: https://perifericas.es/blogs/blog/interseccionalidad-definicion-y-origenes?_pos=1&_sid=06213bf6a&_ss=rCita direct: « Intersectionality is the phenomenon by which each individual is oppressed or holds a privilege on the basis of belonging to multiple social categories.»

¹⁰ Nuria Cunill-Grau (2014) *Intersectoriality in the new social policies*. An analytical-conceptual approach. *Management and public policy*. XXIII (1), 11. pp.5-46. Retrieved from: <http://www.scielo.org.mx/pdf/gpp/v23n1/v23n1a1.pdf>



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