

Gender equality in higher education systems in the Americas (Brazil, Mexico and Peru)



Summary

People 1st International collaborated with the British Council to address gender disparities in higher education and STEM fields across Brazil, Mexico and Peru. These projects, launched under the Going Global Partnerships programme, aimed to provide tailored interventions in each country to foster gender equality and empower women in their respective sectors. By working closely with local stakeholders, the initiatives focused on improving employability, strengthening mentoring networks and supporting policy alignment with gender equality goals.

Background

Despite progress in higher education, significant gender disparities persist, particularly in STEM disciplines, across Brazil, Mexico and Peru. Each country faced unique challenges. In Brazil, the focus was on aligning higher education institutions with global gender equality frameworks to address under representation of women in STEM. In Mexico, the challenge was to ensure that women, particularly from vulnerable backgrounds, gained employability in the male-dominated tech industry. In Peru, the key opportunity was to enhance mentoring programmes for women in STEM, providing them with the support needed to advance their academic and professional careers. Across all three countries, the overarching goal was to provide sustainable strategies that would ensure long-term gender equality and inclusion in these fields.

Our solutions

People 1st International, in partnership with the British Council, provided country-specific interventions designed to address the local challenges:

Brazil: The project team conducted a comparative analysis of global gender equality frameworks such as Athena Swan and GATI and provided tailored recommendations to implement the British Council's Gender Equality Framework (GEF) in Brazil's higher education institutions. Stakeholder engagement with institutions like CAPES, CNPq and CONFAP was key to ensuring long-term commitment to gender equality in STEM.

Mexico: The focus in Mexico was on evaluating the Skills for Women in Tech (SFWIT) programme, which provided training in web development, leadership and socioemotional skills for women from vulnerable backgrounds. People 1st International developed recommendations to enhance the mentoring system and proposed strategies to improve scalability, curriculum structure and long-term sustainability of the programme.

Peru: In Peru, the consultancy developed and strengthened mentoring programmes for women in STEM through a two-day hybrid event, which brought together experts from the UK, Mexico and Peru. The event also introduced a toolkit to provide structured guidance for mentors and mentees. The consultancy's work in Peru focused on aligning the mentoring initiatives with national policies and enhancing collaboration with institutions such as CONCYTEC.

Through collaborative workshops, institutional mapping and research, the project provided tools, benchmarks, and training programmes to foster gender equality and inclusivity in higher education.

Outcome & impact:

The long-term outcomes of the project have provided input and recommendations for the education systems in these countries. Key results include:

Brazil: The project's recommendations for the adoption of the British Council's GEF have provided Brazilian institutions with actionable steps towards improving gender equality in STEM fields. The project helped to build awareness and institutional commitment, laying the groundwork for sustained gender equality initiatives in higher education.

Mexico: The consultancy's work on the SFWIT programme led to improved recommendations around mentoring and curriculum structure, ensuring that future cohorts of women will have better support systems and pathways for success in the tech industry. The emphasis on sustainability has helped create a more structured, scalable model that can be applied to similar programmes in the future.

Peru: The mentorship programme has further developed capacities and widened its scope and opportunities for women in STEM, especially through the support provided by the toolkit and international collaboration. By strengthening mentoring networks and aligning efforts with national policies, the project has laid the foundation for more women to participate in leadership roles within STEM academia and industry.