

Gender equality in higher education systems in Peru



Summary

In 2024, the British Council in Peru, in collaboration with People 1st International, consolidated its project aimed at developing and strengthening mentoring programmes within Peru's higher education and business sectors. The primary focus was to promote internationalisation in mentoring programmes, particularly targeting women in STEM. By engaging with key stakeholders such as universities, research institutions and the business community, the project sought to address gender disparities in STEM fields and enhance the quality and reach of mentoring programmes.

Background

Despite progress in various educational and professional sectors in Peru, women remain underrepresented in STEM disciplines, especially in leadership roles. Existing mentoring programmes did not adequately address the need for international collaboration or provide targeted support for women in STEM. This project offered an opportunity to introduce best practices from international mentoring programmes, specifically from the UK, and adapt them to Peru's higher education and business landscapes. The project aimed to align these efforts with national policies and initiatives to foster long-term institutional commitment and broader gender equality goals.

Our solutions

The consultancy developed a comprehensive mentoring programme with a focus on internationalisation. This was delivered through a two-day hybrid event in Arequipa, Peru, with approximately 70 participants in the venue and an additional 60 participants joining via Zoom. The target audience consisted of heads of STEM departments from higher education institutions (HEIs), representatives from Human Resources and Training and Development departments in industry, as well as mentors and mentees from both academia and business.

The programme featured experts from the UK, Mexico and Peru with expertise in STEM fields and implementing mentoring programmes for women in STEM. These experts included a mix of academics, NGOs and students who had been both mentors and mentees. The sessions covered essential topics such as the design and implementation of effective mentoring programmes, strategies for university and corporate settings and methods for benchmarking mentoring programme impact through KPIs. The event also introduced a seed fund, supported by the British Council, aimed at promoting mentoring initiatives that enhance internationalisation.

Outcome & impact:

Governance framework and stakeholder engagement: The consultancy developed a governance structure to support the effective implementation of mentoring programmes, engaging key stakeholders such as FCDO, CONCYTEC and UNESCO and local Peruvian universities. This structure helped build awareness and best practices for gender equality in STEM mentoring, ensuring long-term sustainability. Through the establishment of collaborative working groups, the project aligned its efforts with national policies and institutional priorities for gender equality.

Adapting global best practices for Peru: The project successfully identified and adapted relevant aspects of international mentoring models, including those from the UK to the Peruvian context. These included strategies for improving mentoring programmes in both academic and corporate settings, particularly in STEM fields. A toolkit was also developed to provide structured guidance for implementing mentoring programmes specifically aimed at women in STEM, offering practical steps and resources to support mentors and mentees.

Sustainability of mentoring initiatives: A key recommendation from the consultancy was to align mentoring initiatives with national policies, supported by institutions such as CONCYTEC. The consultancy emphasised the importance of embedding mentoring programmes for women in STEM into Peru's higher education strategies to ensure their long-term sustainability.

Improved participation of women in STEM: The consultancy focused on addressing gender disparities in STEM fields by recommending interventions to boost women's participation in postgraduate STEM programmes. Recommendations were also made to increase leadership opportunities for women in academia and STEM industries, aligning with Peru's strategic priorities for gender equality.