

Lessons Learned and Recommendations¹

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Lessons Learned

I. Strategy and Design

What works:

- **Early stakeholder engagement**, especially with vulnerable groups, ensures strategies are grounded in local realities and foster long-term ownership.
- **Multidisciplinary design teams** drawing on cross-sector expertise create more holistic, realistic, and technically sound strategies.
- **Flexible planning** enables adaptation to Peru's volatile political and social environment. Early risk identification and mitigation planning enhances program resilience.
- **Using past lessons**—applying insights and recommendations from prior activities—prevents repetition of mistakes and strengthens institutional memory.
- **Clear diagnostics and problem statements** lay the foundation for relevant theories of change and meaningful performance indicators.

What to avoid:

- In the democracy sector, especially in rapidly changing political environments:
 - **Prescriptive scopes of work** limit adaptability and responsiveness.
 - **Overly complex M&E frameworks** with too many indicators reduce strategic focus and dilute implementation effectiveness.

¹ This document was prepared by former members of the USAID/Peru technical teams as a reflection of their professional experience. The views expressed in this text belong solely to the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of USAID or the United States Government.

2. Stakeholder Engagement and Management

What works:

- **Field presence builds trust.** Implementers with a strong local footprint are better positioned to collaborate with local governments and communities.
- **Effective Private sector partnerships.** Built on shared goals, formal agreements (e.g., MOUs or letters of commitment), and clearly defined roles, timelines, and accountability mechanisms.
- **Private sector as change agents.** When meaningfully engaged, businesses can promote integrity and democratic norms in the public sphere.
- **Early and formal government engagement** is critical—particularly when aiming for policy reform or improvements in service delivery. Formalization fosters institutional commitment and continuity.

3. Implementation and Delivery

What works:

- **Adaptability is essential.** Frequent leadership turnover and shifting political priorities demand flexible, responsive approaches.
- **"Learning by doing" and "from policy-to-practice" models** embed new practices more effectively than top-down approaches.
- **Performance-based incentives**, particularly in vulnerable contexts, increase ownership and accountability among local governments and civil society partners.
- **Improvement plans** with concrete milestones and indicators have led to measurable improvements in local service delivery.

4. Sustainability and Exit Strategy

What works:

- **Active participation of beneficiaries** throughout the project cycle strengthens ownership and ensures relevance.
- **Institutionalization of tools and practices** via official norms, budgets, and operational plans increases the likelihood of continuity post-project.
- **Continued capacity development**, investment in innovation, and regular monitoring and evaluation are essential for long-term impact.
- **Political and financial commitment** from the government, private sector, and civil society is vital. Planning for sustainability must begin at the design stage.

Recommendations for Future Programming

To improve future program development and implementation in Peru:

- Secure **genuine government commitment** at all levels to strengthen governance and service delivery outcomes.
- **Co-create policy priorities** with government counterparts and promote **evidence-based decision-making** to address service gaps and drive reform.
- Integrate **systems thinking and adaptive management** from the outset.
- Invest in **sustainable capacity building**, especially at the subnational level.
- Ensure **continuous learning and course correction** throughout implementation.
- Cultivate **long-term partnerships** with government, civil society, and the private sector—engaging them from design to evaluation.

Emerging Priorities for Future Projects

- **Digital transformation with a rights-based lens:** Support initiatives that enhance participation, transparency, and accountability (e.g., open data platforms, e-governance tools, digital literacy campaigns).
- **Democratic resilience:** Promote inclusive civic dialogue and counter disinformation, especially among youth and rural communities, through media literacy and local fact-checking.
- **Intersectional approaches:** Design interventions that address overlapping exclusions—especially those faced by women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and LGBTIQ+ communities—to ensure inclusive outcomes.
- **Combating systemic corruption:** Support structural political reform to rebuild trust and refocus governance on the public good. Promote a culture of integrity, starting with **civic education** in schools.