



## Strengthening the role of women in social science research in Peru

*Project led by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP) - Peru*

### **Abstract**

This project was initiated by a group of female researchers from four social science research institutions: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos – IEP; Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo – GRADE; Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú – PUCP; and Universidad del Pacífico – UP. Their main objective was to increase the visibility of professional women in the social sciences in academic, media and public policy circles. Toward this end, the Steering Group of Women in the Social Sciences (Grupo Sofia) was formed. With the support of TTI, Grupo Sofia promoted various activities, such as creating the first Directory of Professional Women in the Social Sciences, organizing a seminar entitled "Opportunities and barriers of professional women in Peru", holding executive committee meetings, and developing Grupo Sofia's communication strategy and sustainability plan. To consolidate the effort, the project effectively coordinated its activities with the Consortium for Economic and Social Research (CIES).

## COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS

This project was initiated by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP), the Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE), the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) and the Universidad del Pacífico (UP), in collaboration with the Consortium for Economic and Social Research (CIES).

## WHAT THEY DID AND WHY

In Peru, social science research increasingly contributes to discussions on the determinants and consequences of critical development problems, as well as in the design of public policies aimed at addressing them. Both universities and independent think tanks in the country have highly-qualified female social science researchers working within their institutions. Despite the role they play in knowledge generation, however, their visibility remains a big challenge.

To help address this problem, a group of female researchers from IEP, GRADE, PUCP and UP established the “Steering Group of Women in the Social Sciences,” now known as “Grupo Sofia.” The group’s main goal is to increase the visibility of professional women working in the social sciences within academic, media and public policy circles.

Specifically, this long-term goal is being achieved through the following objectives and activities:

- Internal consolidation of Grupo Sofia: A collaborative dialogue among professional women in the social sciences is being promoted through executive committee meetings, the development of an internal communication strategy, and strategic learning from similar initiatives.
- Strategic presence: The visibility of Grupo Sofia in particular, and women in social sciences more specifically, is being promoted through the development and dissemination of Peru’s first Directory of Professional Women in the Social Sciences in various strategic areas, the organization of a seminar examining opportunities and barriers of professional women in Peru, and the development of an external communication strategy.
- Prospective view: A sustainability plan was developed to help ensure Grupo Sofia’s consolidation and long-term continuance.

Methodologically, the project was carried out through the integration of participatory work, applied research and documentation of learning.

## RESULTS

The project enabled a dynamic space of interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and inter-generational dialogue among female researchers from the four institutions involved. Efforts were also made to promote the involvement of male researchers who participated in project activities and this participation is expected to increase over time. Finally, documentation of lessons learned is done on an ongoing basis. All of these factors have helped to create a knowledge base that can be transmitted to female researchers newly joining the Group, non-participating institutions and male counterparts.

The project has succeeded in putting the need to hold critical discussions on the opportunities and barriers that professional women face in research back on the agenda. This has generated a very positive response, particularly among female researchers, from both social and "hard" sciences. For instance, the seminars

organized by Grupo Sofia were attended by over 100 participants, and Grupo Sofia's fanpage on Facebook acquired over 1300 followers within two days of being launched.

The project has also contributed to making professional women more visible. In turn, these efforts have given "a voice" to female researchers who have felt represented both by the Group and the spaces generated through the project. Additionally, by placing the issue on the public agenda, the project has helped to restore women's confidence in their institutions, their professional circles and the public sphere. Finally, the project has helped to generate new opportunities to involve young female professionals and students in making the field of social science research more equitable and inclusive.

### **NEXT STEPS**

TTI's contribution has been essential to activating the process of making professional women in the social sciences more visible. Aside from generating outputs and lessons, the project has been a learning experience in terms of what might be called "incubator funds." These are resources allocated to promote ongoing processes to ensure they become a priority in the public agenda, generate commitment and ultimately change behaviours. In that sense, the project offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on the emphasis that cooperation initiatives usually put on outcome generation. TTI should consider funding other similar initiatives in other Latin American countries and beyond.