



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

DEVELOPMENT FUTURES SERIES

February 2024

UNDP Global Policy Network Brief

New Effective Paths for Approaching the 2030 Agenda with Public and Private Actors amid Political Instability

by Veronica Briceño, Javier Bronfman, Carlos De Los Ríos and Franco Villagarcía¹

The political instability in the Latin American region makes it challenging for countries to incorporate and maintain long-term policies. Peru, a country with solid macroeconomic policies, has recently experienced one of its most critical stages in political terms in the last 30 years. In this scenario of uncertainty, how is it possible to prioritize policies that help achieve sustainable development goals? This policy brief describes the process of challenges and knowledge gained from implementing and adjusting the SDG PUSH methodology to prioritize public policy interventions that could become SDG accelerators in a complex political context. In addition, the policy brief will discuss the critical involvement of the government and how it contributed to the ownership of the process and the positioning of the SDGs in informed decision-making.

Peru is a middle-income country with strong macroeconomic policy frameworks and adequate policies in place.² Its macroeconomic performance has been one of the strongest in the LAC region over the past 20 years. Peru has shown a fast post-pandemic recovery, regaining growth rates driven by the recuperation of external demand and increasing export prices.³ However, despite the country's fast-growing economy, it still has significant development challenges.

Unemployment and poverty rates continue to fall but have not yet reached pre-pandemic levels. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many into

poverty, making Peru lose a decade of progress in this dimension.⁴ Likewise, the country's employment rate has not fully recovered; the precariousness of employment and labour informality remain highly prevalent.

Peru ranks 65th out of 166 countries in the Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Index in 2023.⁵ According to the latest data, significant and major challenges remain in 13 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Institutional challenges driven by long-standing political instability must be tackled across the political spectrum to foster stability and build

confidence. Structural reforms are needed to tackle inequality, poverty and weaknesses in the education and health sectors.

As part of UNDP's SDG Push initiative, Peru started a deep diagnostic process to identify possible priority areas that could become accelerators for reaching the SDGs by 2030.⁶ This policy brief describes both the process and the findings of

Introduction

Rooted in a systemic approach to development, SDG Push is an initiative developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative elements to identify specific public policies with accelerator potential to close the SDG gaps by taking advantage of their synergies and mitigating the possible trade-offs or unintended consequences behind policy choices. The SDG Push aims to provide a comprehensive and country-specific playbook to implement breakthroughs for sustainable development.

The SDG Push methodology includes five steps: (i) scoping, (ii) acceleration dialogues, (iii) economic modelling, (iv) costing and finance and (v) road map with acceleration pathways.

The first step examines the specific institutional contexts of development planning and presents the SDG trends to establish a rapid landscape of current priorities, development trends, possible interlinkages and futures. The dialogues bring together stakeholders from the government, academia, civil society and the UN system for leveraging sensemaking protocols, exploring the scoping outcomes, interrogating previous policies and identifying possible accelerators. The modelling phase uses the results from the dialogues and the existing data to assess

the initial phases of the SDG Push in Peru and, drawing from the lessons learned, provide some practical recommendations. Specific focus is placed on the innovative adjustments made to the UNDP sensemaking methodology⁷ used in the acceleration dialogues carried out in partnership with Peru's National Strategic Planning Centre (CEPLAN).

the impact of potential accelerators on the prioritized SDGs. The costing and finance phase estimates the costs of these initiatives and explores possible financing sources. The process ends with an integrated insights report with recommendations for advancing policy interventions.

Despite several challenges, implementing the SDG Push methodology in Peru has proven particularly valuable, given its development context and current political landscape. The initiative has permitted a new set of engagements around the SDGs that, despite the political turmoil, have moved forward at technical levels with significant traction.

The objective of the policy brief is to present, reflect and distil some lessons from the implementation of the initial phases of the SDG Push. The brief is organized into four sections. The following section presents the a priori expected challenges and those that emerged from the scoping phase. Section three delves into the development dialogues and the adaptations to the initially proposed methodology needed to achieve meaningful results. The final section discusses lessons learned and provides some recommendations.

The scoping phase and emerging challenges

The SDG Push initiative in Peru has provided an opportunity to test and learn about the implementation of integrated support in a challenging political context. The complex political context was known at the beginning of

the process. However, other challenges related to the institutional framework and the governance structure for monitoring SDG implementation were revealed during the scoping phase.

Political context

Being a diverse and heterogeneous society,⁸ Peru has transited through several phases of severe political and economic crisis during its republican life. In recent years, the high levels of inequality and uneven development prospects of the country's different regions have generated polarization among citizens.⁹ This, in addition to the recurring acts of corruption by government authorities, has triggered nationwide protests resulting in continuous change of leadership.¹⁰ Since 2016, Peru has had six presidents.¹¹ The high levels of turnover of ministers, vice ministers and general directors in different sectors of the government has affected the sustainability of public policies, generating high levels of uncertainty.

In addition to the prevailing uncertainty, the ongoing political fluctuations within the government have engendered an inclination to address the nation's challenges through a short-term lens. This prioritization of the present circumstances has taken emphasis away from medium- and long-term perspectives, including those aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Even though this political complexity deepened during the implementation of the SDG Push process, with the presidential vacancy declared by Congress in December 2022 after former president Pedro Castillo's attempt to dissolve Congress, the trajectory of the initiative continued through engagement of government counterparts at a technical level.

Institutional framework supporting development planning.

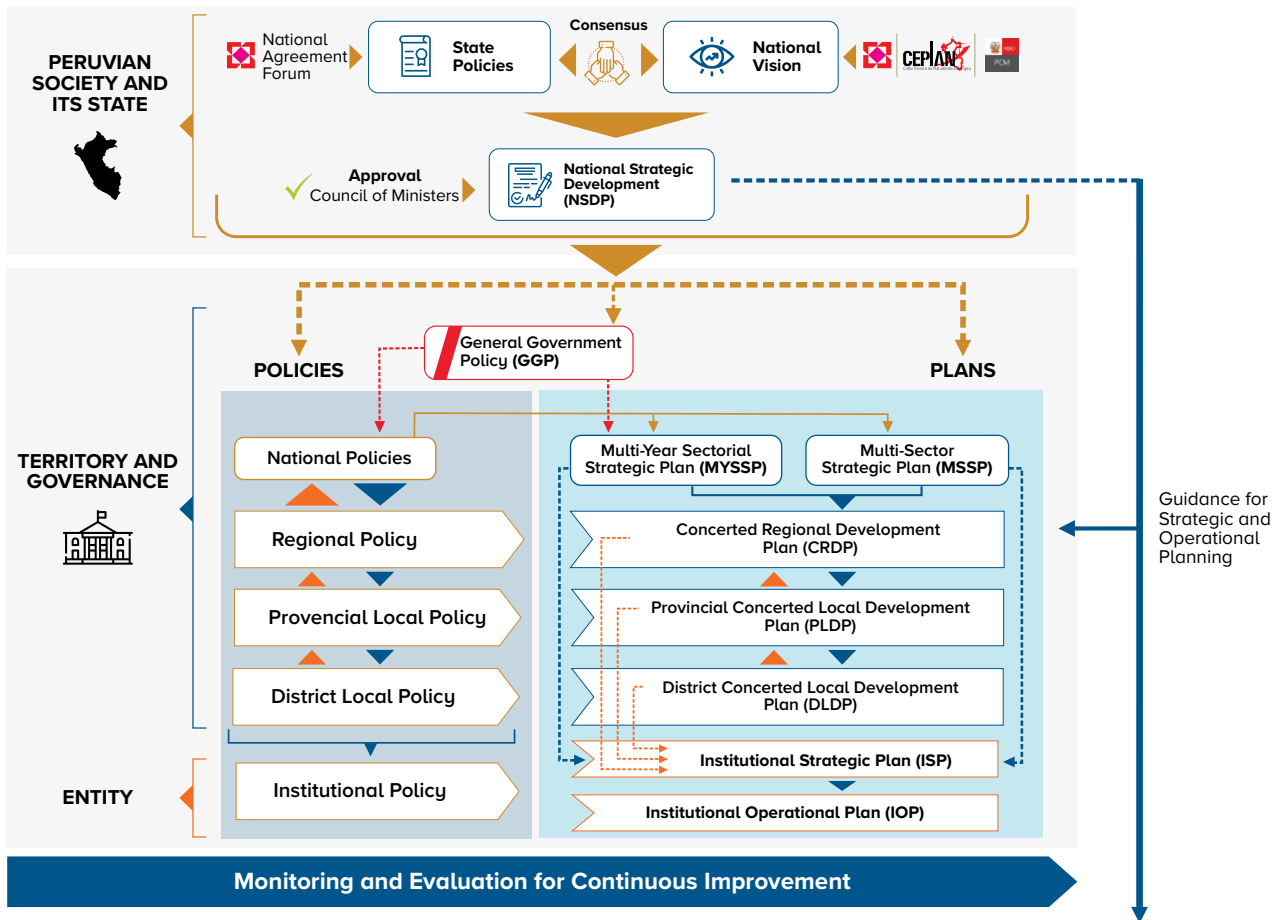
In Peru, the SDGs hold strategic relevance in national planning, as under the political constitution, they are considered an international agreement and a group of commitments that Peru must comply with. As a result, the SDGs should be linked to the main pillars of state policies developed by the National Agreement (a forum for dialogue and consensus-building made up of the government, political parties and civil society). However, even though there are clear linkages between the SDGs and these plans, they are not incorporated directly into strategic development plans, national policies, sectoral plans or other general government policies.

As part of the scoping phase, a detailed review of the national development planning institutional framework was conducted. This review shed light on specific stakeholders to engage during the SDG Push implementation and on the complexity of the planning process in place.

Peru's National Planning System (SINAPLAN) brings together a range of mechanisms and actors that play different roles in the country's development planning and policy implementation. These mechanisms are designed to promote coordination, collaboration and alignment among government entities, regional authorities, and local institutions. However, despite the established articulation structure within SINAPLAN, notable challenges hinder its effective implementation.

As Figure 1 illustrates, the institutional infrastructure for development planning incorporates different actors in the preparation of the National Strategic Development Plan (PEDN), which the government then implements through specific policies and sectoral plans.

Figure 1. National Planning institutional infrastructure



Source: CEPLAN, 2022.

This impressive structure brings together government and society under a robust institutionalized process with clear responsibilities but has not been able to materialize results in many areas of sustainable development.

Moreover, and linked to the SDGs, the scoping phase identified the lack of a clear governance structure in charge of the SDGs. In Peru, different entities have assumed responsibility for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. CEPLAN is responsible for the preparation of the voluntary national review (VNR), the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics manages the system for monitoring and follow-up of the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the support from the United Nations system. However, no entity is designated as the SDG coordinator, while in other countries, responsibility has been assigned to an existing entity or special commissions have been established.

Beyond providing a clear view of the development priorities and the SDG status in Peru, the scoping phase also helped identify some initial challenges that needed to be addressed during the rest of the implementation. In the first place, the continuous political turmoil led the bureaucracy to focus on short-term development issues, prioritizing the current situation and setting aside the medium- and long-term development strategy, which the SDG Push aims to support. Second, Peru’s complex development planning institutional infrastructure required more attention and expanding the scoping process to unforeseen spaces. Finally, the absence of an institutionalized governance mechanism for the SDGs made it challenging to assess the alignment of national priorities to the SDGs, which was key for the following steps of the SDG Push.

The development dialogues: When the initial design faces the reality on the ground

As a concatenated process, the SDG Push phases (Figure 2) build on each other; thus, information from the scoping phase is used to structure the dialogues around the identified priority areas. For Peru, eight development priorities were identified. They became the primary subjects for the second phase. These were (i) poverty, (ii) security, (iii)

rural and agricultural development, (iv) public administration efficiency, (v) risk and disaster management, (vi) infrastructure and housing, (vii) access to health services and (viii) access to quality education, which in turn were mapped to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11, and 16.¹²

Figure 2: SDG Push phases



As mentioned earlier, the dialogues bring together government (national and local entities), academia, civil society and the UN system to discuss and make sense of the scoping outcomes with a goal of identifying possible accelerators to feed the modelling phase of the SDG Push process. During the multi-stakeholder dialogues, participants are encouraged to collectively understand strengths (what is working), gaps (what needs attention), trends (what are the emerging risks and opportunities) and interlinkages (interconnection of issues, solutions and SDG indicators) to then identify intervention points and optimal acceleration pathways.

The sensemaking and accelerating protocol methodology, initially prepared for the development dialogues, consisted of a series of exercises to discuss and prioritize development areas and specific policies based on what emerged from the scoping phase. This process was intended to engage stakeholders with a week or two of all-day meetings.

As one of the main goals of the dialogues was tapping into collective knowledge, ensuring a broad and meaningful participation of stakeholders was essential. The initial plans had to be reconsidered to ensure government involvement, as the initially planned level of engagement was not feasible for government officials. Innovations had to be implemented so this could be achieved.

The first innovation was to add a step between the scoping and dialogue phases: a round of meetings to present the initiative and engage with key stakeholders. These round tables helped better map key stakeholders, gain additional information

to complement the initial scoping and, most of all, generate the necessary commitment from different institutions to participate in the upcoming dialogues.

Meetings were held with authorities at the highest possible level to inform them of the entire process and the next steps. On the other hand, as part of a communication strategy, the SDG Push initiative was mentioned in other meetings at the UNDP CO resident-representative level with public authorities such as ministers and deputy ministers to generate interest and greater participation of their specialists in the following phases.

The participant selection for the dialogues needed to be adjusted to address the challenges linked to the political context mentioned above. Initially, the plan was to invite ministries and vice ministries, but as they were focused on muddling through the political crisis, the dialogues convened high-level technical counterparts and long-standing public servants.

Finally, the dialogues were structured as a two-stage process, starting with an in-person workshop lasting a day and a half and finishing with a one-day virtual event. In between these stages, a survey was conducted with all participants in the first dialogue to narrow down the interventions initially identified to feed the second part of the dialogues.

The first stage of the dialogues brought together more than 45 participants representing civil society, academia, government, and the UN system to discuss and ponder development priorities, the SDGs and reforms needed.

The workshop employed a diverse array of exercises to facilitate participants' comprehension of crucial information and foster initial group interactions. Subsequently, the participants engaged in a discussion aimed at validating the list of key priorities initially identified. This dialogue also encompassed a comprehensive review of the content delineated in the scoping process, thus serving a dual purpose: a) affording participants an additional opportunity to assimilate the information presented in the scoping note and b) discerning any discernible trends that may have emerged pertaining to the relative significance of each priority.

Next, a succinct presentation on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030

was delivered, serving as a preparatory step that effectively aided attendees in comprehending how Peru's pivotal junctures and intricate interconnections could be discerned (see Box 1). These interconnections were elucidated utilizing insights gleaned from the SDG interlinkages study conducted by the European Commission, which distilled interdependencies among SDG targets through an extensive review of pertinent literature. Subsequent to this elucidation, CEPLAN delivered a presentation on trends and horizon mapping, a preparatory phase that laid the groundwork for ensuing exercises in horizon mapping. During these exercises, participants proactively projected into the future, charting the principal trends poised to impact Peru's development trajectory over the ensuing five to 10 years.

Box 1: Leverage points identified for Peru

- **1.2** By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- **1.5** By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
- **2.2** By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under five years of age and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.
- **3.4** By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.
- **8.1** Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 percent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.
- **10.1** By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth in the bottom 40 percent of the population at a rate higher than the national average.
- **10.2** By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- **10.3** Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard.

Between the first and second phases of the dialogues, a survey was prepared and administered to all participants, aiming to refine a series of interventions aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thematic priorities. This survey was thoughtfully structured into three distinct sections: the prioritization of the SDGs,

the delineation of primary subjects linked to the designated SDGs and the ranking of particular public policy interventions.

The second phase of the development dialogues was strategically dedicated to validating of previously identified potential accelerators,

accomplished through collaborative efforts within small groups. This phase also entailed identifying novel interventions in conjunction with the active participation of the attendees while garnering specific particulars regarding these interventions. Drawing upon the distilled information, participants in this phase concentrated their efforts on five overarching domains: (i) Alleviation of poverty, (ii) Provision of healthcare services, (iii) Advancement of education, (iv) Stimulation of economic growth and (v) Enhancement of government transparency and efficacy. With group assignments based on individual expertise and institutional affiliations,

participants undertook the task of amassing policy insights within these delineated domains. Subsequently, each group compiled an exhaustive dossier containing intricate specifics pertaining to each respective intervention.

All the information from the scoping phase and dialogues fed the modelling phase of the SDG Push, where different policy scenarios have been analysed using a general equilibrium model that provides a prospective look at the potential impact and spill over effects of the prioritized interventions on the different SDGs.

Conclusions: Lessons learned and recommendations

The SDG Push initiative in Peru has proven valuable for repositioning the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in national public policy discussions as well as providing useful insights to policymakers based on a systemic approach to development.

Repositioning the SDGs with various actors, including the government and civil society, during a complex political context required the continuous involvement of these stakeholders. Having a strong government counterpart at a technical level and a communication strategy at a political level proved to be paramount to the success of the initiative, as a sense of joint ownership permitted the work to continue through difficult times. Thus, identifying relevant actors from multiple sectors in the round of meetings with high-level authorities at the step added in the methodology was also crucial, as continuous participation and engagement created a sense of co-creation that led to strong legitimacy for the process.

As a sequential process that involves different tools and methodologies both quantitative and qualitative, the SDG Push initial design needed to be adjusted to be carried out in Peru. Global teams developing tools to be implemented at country level should leverage local and regional knowledge at the beginning of the tool development process. Being aware of the conditions and limitations at country level could lead to a more suitable and flexible design and thus a more efficient deployment of the tools at country level.

In the context of political instability, the flexibility of the process and methodology is fundamental in allowing the addition of steps and thus achieving the adaptation and ownership of the process. In the case of Peru, identifying critical actors at the

technical and political level, preliminary meetings and adjustments in the dialogue stage helped to ensure the technical rigor required by the SDG Push and the ownership of the process, despite the political context.

In the case of Peru, the need to adjust the initially proposed dialogue methodology was challenging and generated delays in the process. The simplification of the process and the time adjustments made it possible to bring together key stakeholders who otherwise would not have been able to participate in the dialogues. The survey conducted between the two phases of the dialogues also helped keep the participants engaged with the initiative.

Another interesting conclusion from this process is that even when countries have strong development-planning institutional arrangements and technical capacity behind these institutions, development results on the ground are not ensured. In Peru, an important challenge lies in the lack of capacity to implement policies and programmes at the local level. Often, local entities face resource constraints along with limited expertise and technical know-how, which can impede their ability to actively participate in planning and then deliver what has been planned. This capacity gap may result in inefficiencies, delays and difficulties in aligning local development priorities with national objectives.

Additionally, effective communication among the various actors at different levels of governance is crucial to ensure the smooth functioning of the National Planning System in Peru. Lack of clear communication creates misunderstandings among the central, regional and local governments, leading to a misalignment in development

strategies and duplication of efforts, ultimately preventing the achievement of collective goals and targets.

At the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and during a polycrisis, countries must rethink development. Focusing their resources on specific pathways with accelerating potential, moving away from silos and sectoral interventions and embracing the potential of systemic development approaches could lead to more effective and efficient policies while preventing the most vulnerable from being left behind. The SDG Push initiative in Peru has proven to be a valuable tool to advance in this direction by identifying accelerator pathways to sustainable development. The evidence produced during

this process has been useful for government counterparts in preparing sectoral plans and holding policy discussions across different areas of development. The systems lens through which development was analyzed during the SDG Push has been embraced by Peru's sectoral ministries and planning entities.

On the other hand, implementing the SDG Push methodology and its results is essential for local governments in their policy prioritization process. However, it must be accompanied by an adequate localization of the 2030 Agenda and incorporation of the SDGs into local and national planning processes to achieve the necessary alignment.

Endnotes

- 1 Veronica Briceño Huerta is the specialist in Entrepreneurship Development and SDGs; email veronica.briceno@undp.org. Javier Bronfman is the SDG Integration Advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean; email javier.bronfman@undp.org. Carlos De los Rios is the country office economist in UNDP-Perú; email carlos.de.los.rios@undp.org. Franco Villagarcía Gonzales is the programme officer for Prosperity and Poverty Reduction in UNDP-Perú, email franco.villagarcia@undp.org. The authors would like to thank Ana María Hernández and Fabio Oliva, for their review and helpful comments on this brief as well as our colleagues at CEPLAN in Peru who also played an important role in the SDG Push initiative.
- 2 See <https://www.oecd.org/latin-america/countries/peru/>.
- 3 See <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/peru/overview#1>.
- 4 See <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/peru/publication/resurgir-fortalecidos-evaluacion-de-pobreza-y-equidad-en-el-peru>.
- 5 See <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>.
- 6 The SDG Push process design comprises five steps: scoping, acceleration dialogues, modelling, sustainable finance, acceleration pathways. See <https://www.sparkblue.org/content/about-sdg-push-integrated-approach-accelerate-sdgs>.
- 7 See UNDP Portfolio Sensemaking & Accelerating Protocol, developed by AXILO for the Regional Innovation Centre of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific in 2019, and Sensemaking Workshop Preparation Guide and Facilitator Guide and Sensemaking Training, <https://www.undp.org/publications/sensemaking-workshop-preparation-guide-and-facilitator-guide-and-sensemaking-training>.
- 8 According to the Indigenous and Native People's Database of the Ministry of Culture, there are 48 native languages spoken by over 5 million Peruvians. (See: <https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/lenguas> and [https://repositorio.cultura.gob.pe/bitstream/handle/CULTURA/82/La%20diversidad%20cultural%20en%20el%20Per%FA.pdf?sequence=1#:~:text=Son%20unas%205000%20culturas%20diferentes,la%20regi%C3%B3n%20\(CEPAL%202007.\)](https://repositorio.cultura.gob.pe/bitstream/handle/CULTURA/82/La%20diversidad%20cultural%20en%20el%20Per%FA.pdf?sequence=1#:~:text=Son%20unas%205000%20culturas%20diferentes,la%20regi%C3%B3n%20(CEPAL%202007.)).)
- 9 See <https://amnistia.org.pe/descargar/InformeAnual2023-2022.pdf>.
- 10 See <https://news.un.org/es/story/2023/03/1519142>.
- 11 See <https://www.dw.com/es/inestabilidad-pol%C3%ADtica-en-per%C3%BA-seis-presidentes-en-seis-a%C3%B1os/a-64561587>.
- 12 SDG 1 is "End poverty in all its forms everywhere", SDG 2 is "Zero Hunger", SDG 3 is "Good health and well-being", SDG 4 is "Quality education", SDG 9 is "Industry, innovation, infrastructure", SDG 11 is "Sustainable cities and communities" and SDG 16 is "Peace, justice and strong institutions".