Latimpacto



Case Study:

# Philanthropy's place based-approach in strengthening ecosystems

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AngloAmerican Foundation

# 1. About the Organization

Anglo American Foundation (AAF) is dedicated to championing the next generation. Harnessing the power of philanthropy to shift systems and strengthen civic space, AAF works with locally led partners to catalyse youth agency and unlock capital and opportunity - creating the conditions for young people to shape their futures and drive change.

# 2. The Case Study

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| **Project Name** | Philanthropy's place based-approach in strengthening ecosystems |
| **Sector** | Ecosystem strengthening |
| **Location** | Arequipa, Perú |
| **Duration** | 3 years (active program) |
| **Partners** | Anglo American Foundation (AAF) local partners in Arequipa |
| **Financial Instrument** | Donation |
| **Mobilized Capital** | USD $6.305.002 in projects in or connected with Arequipa |
| **SDG Addressed** | ODS 3<br>ODS 17 |

*AAF's philanthropic approach in Arequipa has led to initial indications of ecosystem strengthening. The experience offers a window into how targeted, place-based strategies can shape local systems.*

AAF's programmes operate in South Africa, Peru, Chile and Brazil, with a focus on driving systemic change. This is achieved by shifting perceptions, norms, beliefs and behaviours, alongside influencing policies that address root causes and reduce barriers to action.

Although work is delivered at global and regional levels, a place-based approach underpins efforts to reshape communities. This enables young people to be recognised as valued actors who can exercise democratic agency, pursue opportunities supported by strong mental wellbeing, and feel heard and respected.

A place-based model allows for deeper engagement within specific geographies, strengthening understanding of local systems, fostering long-term partnerships, and supporting the co-creation of contextually relevant and sustainable solutions. Concentrated work in selected locations also builds a nuanced picture of youth aspirations, social dynamics and systemic

barriers, while enabling the development and testing of models with potential for wider adoption and scale.

## 3. The Problem Addressed

Peru is highly diverse, with wide variation across culture, ethnic groups, geography and biodiversity. Levels of economic and social development also differ significantly between regions. Lima, which hosts 28% of the population, serves as the country's primary economic hub and contributes 48% of national gross value added. Against this backdrop, AAF made exploratory investments in 2023 and 2024 to better understand the philanthropic landscape.

Insights from this work show that the philanthropy and impact investment ecosystems remain at an early stage of development. The landscape is characterised by limited diversity of actors, fragmented activity, and a reliance on traditional investment approaches. Those engaged in philanthropy and impact investment are largely concentrated in Lima, highlighting significant regional gaps and, in turn, opportunities for longer-term engagement beyond the capital.

The research also identified strong interest among young people in contributing to social and environmental initiatives. However, these efforts tend to be isolated, with limited support and little visibility outside Lima.

Overall, the assessment highlights a need for substantial investment in capacity-building and skills development to lay the foundations for a more competitive and effective development and philanthropy ecosystem.

In response to these findings—and the clear need to strengthen ecosystems beyond Lima—a place-based focus was established in Arequipa. As Peru's second-largest city, Arequipa offers strong economic and social capital, alongside relatively stable infrastructure and political conditions. These factors create a conducive environment for building momentum towards communities where young people can emerge as valued actors.

Following the selection of Arequipa, a series of baseline grants were awarded to build a clearer picture of local conditions. These short-term research initiatives enabled locally rooted actors to generate grounded insights into the current landscape, alongside initial programme recommendations. Key high-level learnings included:

- ***Mental health challenges:*** Arequipa has the highest suicide rate in Peru, but access to care is very limited—with only 3 psychiatrists per 100,000 people. Public funding for mental health is low (about USD 6 per person per year). Community Mental Health Centres provide integrated care, but they often do not meet adolescents' needs and are scarce in rural areas.
- ***Wellbeing of young people:*** Young people show personal strengths like resilience, hope, and optimism. However, many are struggling emotionally. An Ikigai survey showed that 81.6% of youth said they experienced stress, anxiety, or depression in the past week, and nearly half (46.7%) reported low or moderate life satisfaction.
- ***Participation in civil society:*** Arequipa has a strong tradition of civic engagement, but participation among young people is inconsistent. More than half (55%) are not part of

any organisation, and volunteering is often short-term and informal. A key challenge is limited organisational capacity—only 33.6% of organisations have training in managing volunteers, which affects sustainability and retention.

- ***Lack of coordination in civil society:*** Collaboration between organisations is limited, and relationships with the public sector are often fragmented and marked by distrust. This is due to issues like bureaucracy, politicisation, and lack of continuity.
- ***Opportunities in recycling and waste management:*** There is strong potential for employment in recycling and waste valorisation. However, the sector faces challenges such as informality and lack of access to financing. As a result, around 6% of informal recyclers live in extreme poverty.
- ***Barriers in key economic sectors:*** Manufacturing (employing 14.4% of the workforce) and renewable energy sectors have growth potential. However, progress is limited by issues like weak access to finance, informal business practices, and insufficient incentives for sustainable investments.
- ***Education-to-employment gap:*** There are major communication gaps between training institutions, families, and employers. As a result, education programmes often do not match the skills that industries actually need.

## 4. The Solution

The findings led to a deep reflection as to the best way to approach our investment into Arequipa, concentrating on using a different kind of philanthropy: One which focused an innovative ecosystem approach, all while ensuring that programmes were co-designed and, where possible, locally led. Within AAF these are known as "our ways of working": It is the 'how' AAF drives and approaches community engagement models.

> ***Ecosystem approach***
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> *Taking an ecosystem approach means driving a holistic strategy that sees a community as akin to a natural ecosystem, where people, organisations, resources, and environments are deeply interconnected. It moves away from the traditional approach of isolated solutions and rather pushes to increase cross-sector collaboration to work collectively to create the change*

> ***Co-designing programmes***
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> *The process of co-designing a programme is a participatory process where stakeholders in a community build a programme together. It is a long, and sometimes messy and frustrating process that requires building of trust and relationships. We start out with transparent communication about what AAF aims to do through informal visits, conversations, participation in community events, and brainstorming sessions with a wide range of stakeholders. This process, using an evolving, immersive, flexible way of working, is repeated for as long as it takes to co-design a programme.*

> *Although it takes time to co-design, this ensures that the programme developed is relevant and owned by the community, which eventually leads to the sustainability that is so vitally required.*

> ***Locally-led***
> *At AAF we are proud to support the OECD Guidelines for Supporting Locally Led Development. We believe the people closest to the challenges hold the insight, innovation and leadership needed to shape systemic change. The OECD guidelines reflect many of the principles we value deeply: trust-based partnerships, long-term thinking, equitable collaboration and strengthening local ecosystems.*

Over several months – focusing on identifying where AAF could add the greatest value – programmes were carefully co-designed by AAF; under the overall coordination of the Head of Programmes and Partnerships in Latin America, in close collaboration with the impact, communications and operation team members.

This process prioritised building on existing assets within Arequipa. A flexible approach to funding enabled variation across programmes: some were approved at an earlier stage, others later; some were delivered through a single partner, while others involved multiple organisations; and funding durations were tailored according to programme needs.

A significant proportion of grants focused on strengthening institutional capacity. Recognising that resilient ecosystems depend on strong organisations, this approach prioritised building internal capabilities, enhancing competitive positioning, and enabling knowledge-sharing across local partners.

Beyond grant-making, an ecosystem approach was embedded from the outset. Partner organisations were made aware of one another's presence in Arequipa, the broader vision for the work, and the potential for collaboration. This helped position partners as contributors to a wider system, rather than as isolated initiatives, and encouraged the development of synergies across programmes.

A core element of the ecosystem approach is the systematic collection of data capturing learnings to foster and accelerate cross-sector collaboration. As part of monitoring and evaluation, quantitative data is complemented by jointly agreed learning questions developed in partnership with organisations, enabling the tracking of both tangible outputs and outcomes alongside a broader narrative of change. This includes capturing shifts within the ecosystem—such as changes in behaviours, practices and, over time, policy. Regular engagement with partners is central to this process, creating space for open and constructive dialogue on progress, challenges, successes and lessons learned, including critical reflection on what has not worked.

In parallel, AAF's communications strategy focuses on strengthening partners' profiles and positioning within the ecosystem, recognising that greater visibility and clarity in positioning strengthens their ties to the community and key stakeholders and amplifies their work and learnings across the sector.

# 5. Results

Using the above thinking behind the complimentary narrative AAF has seen the following results emerge:

## Short-term outputs and outcomes linked to ecosystem building

Hemos logrado avances iniciales en nuestros resultados en Arequipa, habiendo alcanzado las siguientes cifras:

- We have made early strides in our results in Arequipa having reached the following numbers:
- USD $1.230.398 of co-investment leveraged through 22 co-investors
- 18 strategic partnerships created
- 127 organisations undergoing organisational capacity development
- A total of 104 individuals completed training being equipped to pass on their knowledge forward through training, mentorship or facilitation resulting in a further 902 end-users being trained through this train-the-trainer approach
- 9 action-orientated groups (including one youth advisory committee) established and attended by almost 300 people
- 3 manuals, curricula, guides, playbooks developed and being implemented at 10 institutions in Arequipa
- 4 research and insight reports produced on Arequipa

## Ecosystem Shifts

AAF believe that there is strong early evidence that a number of ecosystemic shifts have become apparent in Arequipa in the last year. This applies particularly around ecosystem connections emerging as a result of AAF's approach.

A picture is emerging of a system where stakeholders are becoming more visible to one another; there are beginnings of trust, coordination and shared identity; and where increased capacity has strengthened the quality of the programmes. Some of the identified early ecosystemic shifts are listed below:

- ***Capacity building leading to improved strength:*** By working on improving institutional and technical capacities for organisations, this has naturally led to a stronger civil society ecosystem that is poised for growth. One locally based mental wellbeing organisation Educa Impacta Crece, through their work with AAF's partner EMpower has managed to grow as a team, improve their governance and to have a solid strategic plan for the years ahead. Through UTEC's intensive capacity building to eight accelerators/incubators were able to provide better incubator/accelerator services to 100 start-ups, 67% of which were classified as impact enterprises. This is tangible proof

of the ripple effect that can be achieved by supporting anchor partners with extended influence.

- ***Tangible cross-sector collaboration and a renewed sense of community:*** During the Arequipa mudslides in early 2026, connections made directly through Ikigai's civic engagement programme ensured that 30 organisations worked together to provide aid. Over and above the initiative was spearheaded by another AAF community foundation partner Nos x Otros
- ***Reduced isolation and increased sharing of experiences and learning:*** Ikigai engaged just short of 400 youth, many of whom had never volunteered before, generating concrete records of interest and registrations with organisations. By being innovative in tracking the expansion of networks and links among organisations and youth, Ikigai has been able to capture young people reporting greater clarity about how and where they can participate showing how volunteering barriers have been lowered.
- ***Working together to create change:*** Crisis Text Line's co-design of their Arequipa programme evidences a deliberate effort to join EMpower, Ikigai and other locally-led organisations in creating systemic change around mental wellbeing in Arequipa. By working with EMpower's partner organisations, and utilising Ikigai's volunteer database it is prioritising mental wellbeing as a joint effort and ensuring a reduction in duplication.

## 6. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

This case study highlights how a place-based approach in Arequipa is already contributing to stronger, more connected ecosystems, as part of a broader, collaborative effort with partners advancing social capital, civic engagement, and mental wellbeing.

While these early signs of progress in the ecosystem are promising, it is important to recognise the inherent complexity of this kind of work. Systemic change is inherently complex and often unfolds over long periods, which can make progress feel gradual. As a learning-oriented organisation, AAF continues to refine its approach through clearly defined learning questions and close engagement with partner organisations. This enables the co-design and shared measurement of success, alongside ongoing reflection and adaptation.

In a context where immediate results are often prioritised, adopting a dual impact narrative is critical – capturing both short-term achievements and longer-term systemic shifts.

An ecosystem approach not only reduces duplication and improves efficiency, but also builds lasting local capacity. In Arequipa, this is enabling regional actors to reduce reliance on centralised support and reinvest knowledge and tools within their own context.

For organisations seeking sustainable impact, this case-study offers a clear call to action invest in collaboration, embrace learning, and commit to long-term systems change.

# 7. References

OECD. (2026). *Directrices prácticas para apoyar el desarrollo liderado localmente:* https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/practical-guidelines-for-supporting-locally-led-development_eaecf72b-en.html