

# IDS Bulletin

Transforming Development Knowledge

Volume 54 | Number 2 | October 2023

## **KNOWLEDGE IN TIMES OF CRISIS: TRANSFORMING RESEARCH-TO-POLICY APPROACHES**

Issue Editors **Andrea Ordóñez Llanos** and  
**James Georgalakis**



Notes on Contributors	iii
Notas sobre los colaboradores de los artículos en español	viii
Notes sur les contributeurs à l'article en français	x
ملاحظات على المساهمين في المقال العربي	xi
<b>Introduction: Lessons for Locally Driven Research Responses to Emergencies</b> Andrea Ordóñez Llanos and James Georgalakis	1
<b>Introducción: Lecciones para la investigación sobre respuestas a emergencias impulsada a nivel local</b> Andrea Ordóñez Llanos y James Georgalakis	13
<b>Introduction : Leçons issues des recherches menées localement en réponse aux situations d'urgence</b> Andrea Ordóñez Llanos et James Georgalakis	27
<b>Co-Modelling for Relief and Recovery from the Covid-19 Crisis in Zimbabwe</b> Ramos E. Mabugu, Héléne Maisonnave, Martin Henseler, Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu and Albert Makochekanwa	41
<b>Research During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Crucial Arms for Struggle</b> Ana Carolina Ogando	59
<b>Policy Influence in Crisis: Reflections from a Southern Thinktank</b> Helani Galpaya, Gayani Hurulle and David Gunawardana	75
<b>Lessons Learned from Mobilising Research for Impact During the Covid-19 Pandemic</b> Benghong Siela Bossba	93
<b>Arab Region Social Protection Systems: Research and Policy Design Challenges</b> Farah Al Shami	109
نظم الحماية الاجتماعية في المنطقة العربية: التحديات أمام إجراء البحوث وسن السياسات Farah Al Shami	131
<b>Humanitarian vs Pandemic Responses: Vulnerable Groups among Rohingyas in Bangladesh</b> Sameen Nasar, Bachera Aktar, Muhammad Riaz Hossain and Sabina Faiz Rashid	149
<b>Resilience in the Time of a Pandemic: Developing Public Policies for Ollas Comunes in Peru</b> Ricardo Fort and Lorena Alcázar	165
<b>Resiliencia en tiempos de pandemia: generando políticas públicas para las ollas comunes en Perú</b> Ricardo Fort y Lorena Alcázar	181
<b>(Re-)Thinking a Collaborative Research Model After Covid-19: Introducing Colabora.Lat</b> Jennifer Cyr, Matías Bianchi, Ignacio F. Lara and Florencia Coda	197
<b>(Re)pensar un modelo de investigación colaborativa después del Covid-19: presentación de Colabora.Lat</b> Jennifer Cyr, Matías Bianchi, Ignacio F. Lara y Florencia Coda	209
<b>Glossary</b>	223

# Resilience in the Time of a Pandemic: Developing Public Policies for *Ollas Comunes* in Peru\*

Ricardo Fort<sup>1</sup> and Lorena Alcázar<sup>2</sup>

Translated from Spanish by Atlas Translations

**Abstract** The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic has created economic, social, and food security crises in many countries throughout the world. Faced with growing hunger in Peru, and the government's delayed and inadequate reaction, the most important response came from the citizens themselves, particularly the women, in the form of thousands of social care initiatives known as *ollas comunes* (literally 'communal pots', similar to soup kitchens, whereby local communities pool their resources to supply food for everyone in the neighbourhood). This article tells the parallel stories of the resurgence of these *ollas comunes* and the state-funded support initiatives, alongside the process followed by GRADE (Group for the Analysis of Development – Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo; a non-profit research centre founded in Peru) that enabled it to contribute to those institutions looking to improve access to food for the most vulnerable people. Both stories are underpinned by a common ability to adapt quickly, which is crucial for achieving objectives in uncertain and ever-changing situations.

**Keywords** Peru, hunger, food security, public policies, Covid-19, *ollas comunes*, impact, adaptation.

## 1 Introduction: The coronavirus pandemic in Peru gave rise to a food crisis that was responded to, first and foremost, by the *ollas comunes*

The pandemic was not just a health crisis; it also created a multidimensional crisis spanning economic, social, and food security concerns. Peru is one of the countries most impacted by the food insecurity triggered by the pandemic. The measures introduced to control the spread of the virus led to an economic



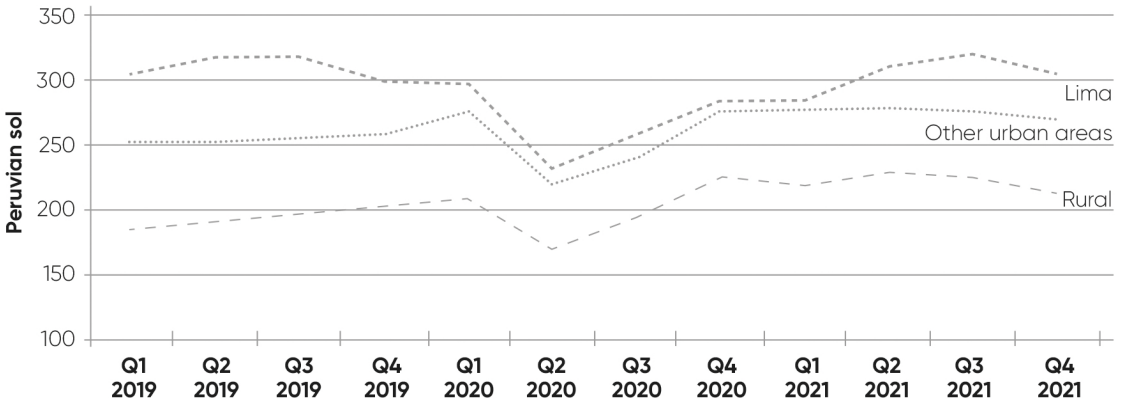
© 2023 The Authors. *IDS Bulletin* © Institute of Development Studies | DOI: 10.19088/1968-2023.138

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence (CC BY), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and source are credited and any modifications or adaptations are indicated.

This article is also available in Spanish. The *IDS Bulletin* is published by Institute of Development Studies, Library Road, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK.

This article is part of *IDS Bulletin* Vol. 54 No. 2 October 2023 'Knowledge in Times of Crisis: Transforming Research-to-Policy Approaches'; the Introduction is also recommended reading.

Figure 1 Monthly food consumption by area (average value per capita in Peruvian sol, deflated)



Source Authors' own, based on data from INEI (2021)

downturn, which resulted in many families experiencing a loss of earnings and, in turn, affected their ability to purchase food. This was reflected in the recent Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations report on food worldwide (FAO *et al.* 2021), which found that 16.6 million people living in Peru were struggling with food insecurity, accounting for approximately half of the overall population.

On 11 March 2020, the government declared – by Supreme Decree No. 008-2020-SA – a state of national public health emergency and established what was known as ‘mandatory social confinement’. This lockdown was in place 16 March–26 June 2020, and involved the closure of all public and private establishments, with the exception of those related to health and food retail (other than restaurants).

These measures had a devastating impact on the Peruvian economy, which was mirrored in the population’s food consumption patterns. Figure 1 shows a significant drop in food consumption across the whole of Peru, particularly during the three months of mandatory lockdown. The fall in food consumption was greater in the capital, Lima (–21 per cent), and other urban areas (–20 per cent) than in rural areas (–18 per cent).

Faced with increasing levels of hunger across the country, one of the first and most crucial responses came from the citizens themselves, primarily in the form of the social care initiatives known as *ollas comunes*. *Ollas comunes* are self-managed neighbourhood organisations set up by local residents, mainly women, who see collective action (that is, combined efforts and resources) as an opportunity to gain access to food and band together to purchase, cook, and distribute food portions to their community. During times of crisis, a remarkable yet

---

**Box 1 *Ollas comunes* in Peru: resilience and solidarity against a precarious backdrop characterised by limitations**

As part of the support provided to the Lima Metropolitan Municipality (Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima, MML) (details in Section 2), Group for the Analysis of Development (Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo, GRADE) analysed the characteristics and principal problems of the *ollas comunes* that took part in the registration scheme. This information was then supplemented through in-depth surveys and interviews conducted on a sample of 40 *ollas comunes* in three districts in the capital.

*Ollas comunes* emerge in the most precarious and cut-off areas of the capital, where access to basic services such as water, electricity, and drainage is scarce. Furthermore, being spontaneous citizens' initiatives without the benefit of any public support, the *ollas comunes* generally have no location of their own and emerge in improvised spaces, borrowed premises, or even out in the street. They have to contend with a severe lack of both equipment, such as cooking utensils and refrigerators, and protection measures against the pandemic: approximately half of all *ollas comunes* stated that they did not have items such as hygiene kits, masks, or alcohol. These problems create difficulties when it comes to operating and preparing food in accordance with the appropriate hygiene conditions.

The *ollas comunes* also face enormous difficulties in accessing food supplies, which affects their ability to offer a varied and balanced diet, including more nutritional foods such as vegetables and meat. In stark contrast to the soup kitchens, they are not assigned any municipal budget, which means that they are essentially dependent on their own contributions and sporadic donations to finance their spending. Owing to the economic vulnerability of their members and the unstable nature of the donations they receive, the *ollas* have no choice but to consume a high-carbohydrate diet, as carbohydrates are relatively inexpensive and, more importantly, they also tend to be the foods donated the most regularly.

Despite the scarcity of resources they face, the members contribute their own personal resources: some offer space within their home, while others lend equipment (pots, ladles, etc.), donate money, or contribute their time and effort. In addition, they attend to social cases identified by members, whereby no contribution is requested from the beneficiary. The *ollas comunes* are partially funded – in accordance with their self-managed mode of operation – through the sales of food portions (equating to, on average, approximately half of the portions prepared, according to the registration data). This does not contradict the fact that the *ollas comunes* are humanitarian organisations, as the prices they charge for each portion are fairly low (in most cases, in the region of less than 1.5 Peruvian sol (PEN) or US\$0.25 per portion).

In spite of the inherently precarious nature of the *ollas comunes*, they remain a symbol of solidarity and a response to the hunger crisis, while also representing a place of companionship and empowerment for their members, above all for women. The information collected through the survey and interviews shows that these spaces embody the sense of leadership and renewed self-worth of the women who run them. *Ollas comunes*, then, are a symbol of resistance for thousands of people who, when faced with challenges such as the illness or death of family members, the loss of their jobs, or their businesses going bankrupt, decided to unite their efforts to meet their most basic need: food.

Source Authors' own

---

recurring phenomenon was observed throughout Peru, and above all in Lima: the reactivation and multiplication of hundreds of *ollas comunes* in poor areas of the cities, particularly in the outskirts of the metropolitan area of Lima.

According to Lima Metropolitan Municipality (Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima, MML) records, by February 2021 there were already over 1,700 *ollas comunes* in the city's outskirts used by almost 180,000 people. These initiatives appeared in spite of the central government grants available to those facing poverty or unemployment during lockdown. In their analysis of these so-called vouchers, the Ombudsman's Office (an autonomous government institution in Peru) reports that a lack of updates on the population's consumption patterns made it very difficult for the government to identify all those people who had recently found themselves in a vulnerable situation (Defensoría del Pueblo 2020). To compound matters further, the few existing state-run food programmes were discontinued following their interruption for several months at the start of the pandemic, which only boosted the emergence of the *ollas*. For example, the soup kitchens – state-funded social organisations supported by local governments for several decades, tasked with providing low-cost or free meals to the vulnerable city populations – were not operational during those first few months, largely due to the risk posed to the elderly women who managed them. These soup kitchens are also no longer located in the most vulnerable areas of the cities. In addition, the Qali Warma programme that provides food for children in pre-school and primary state education across the country ceased operations after the schools had closed.

Despite all the warning signs pointing to this potential food crisis, the government response was too little too late when it came to tackling the food emergency during the first year of the pandemic. The lack of recognition of and support for the *ollas comunes* was particularly apparent, as these initiatives were not taken into consideration by public policy. However, from mid-2020, the MML began to organise support initiatives for these organisations, in a move that was followed by central government support through the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Ministerio de Desarrollo e Inclusión Social, MIDIS) in 2021. GRADE was able to contribute in this regard, thanks to support for the project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). This article aims to describe our journey in helping to create a strategy for the state to recognise, identify, and support these *ollas comunes*, during which our research and communication methods had to be adapted to the continually changing situation in the country.

## **2 The role of GRADE in designing new public interventions for *ollas comunes***

Just like the rest of the world, the Peruvian government was not prepared when it came to responding to the crisis brought on

by the pandemic, which resulted in a set of initial prevention and control measures lacking in any coherent strategy. In this context, the GRADE team began to draw up recommendations for state action, based on information and evidence gathered over the course of several years of applied research. In a particularly key move at the start of April 2020, the team published a pair of articles in national newspapers, which identified the zones in the capital most at risk of infection, as well as the wholesale food markets most likely to fuel the spread of Covid-19 (Fort and Espinoza 2020a, 2020b).

Following these publications, and thanks to a reputation borne of decades of work in rigorous applied research, GRADE began to be contacted by several public offices looking for technical consultancy support to shape the policies that were being developed to tackle the public health emergency. Between April and July 2020, the GRADE team was contacted by: the Presidency of the Council of Ministers to identify priority zones for emergency food parcel delivery; the Ministry of Economic and Financial Affairs (Ministerio de Economía y Finanzas, MEF) to select the wholesale food markets that posed the greatest risk and to develop a nationwide incentive programme to promote hygiene control in those establishments; the Ministries of Defence, Health, and Social Inclusion to design a national programme to monitor infection levels and food distribution (known locally as Operation TAYTA, or Territorial Operation for Aid for Treatment and Isolation against Covid-19) (*El Peruano* 2021; Ministry of Defence 2020); and MIDIS to evaluate the soup kitchen system in the country's main cities. This latter effort was to later become a collaboration to design a support strategy for the *ollas comunes*.

In all these cases, GRADE's contribution, which involved the technical design and support of all aforementioned initiatives, was provided free of charge. Given the substantial amount of human resources required to carry out all these tasks concurrently, GRADE's commitment was clearly not sustainable in the medium term. Fortunately, in July 2020, the IDRC granted funds to GRADE for the development of research and actions to strengthen Peru's food distribution and social protection systems. Thanks to these funds, GRADE was able to respond to and maintain all the above requests for technical support, while at the same time gaining a deeper understanding of the problems created by the health emergency, promoting the academic debate in this respect, and developing proposals for solutions for immediate application within several sectors of the Peruvian government.

### **2.1 First support for the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion**

As previously mentioned, the central government's response was too little too late when it came to tackling the food emergency. The first governmental strategy was essentially centred around the delivery of food parcels across the municipalities. The lack of

adequate records and procedures in the various areas meant that, in many cases, this aid did not benefit those who needed it most (Santandreu 2021). The response was extremely limited. Throughout 2020, only 9.6 per cent of homes in the whole of Peru received a food parcel. Between the months of April and September, parcels arrived at 15 per cent of homes, of which approximately 19 per cent were neither in poverty nor in a vulnerable situation (Alcázar, Rojas and López de Romaña 2021). Furthermore, the municipalities lacked the capacity for effective and targeted distribution of the parcels, which caused a variety of problems. A supervisory operation carried out by the treasury inspector's office found that 32 per cent of municipalities were facing deficiencies such as these.

The problems highlighted through that experience prompted the government to provide existing programmes and organisations with institutional support for the purchase and/or distribution of food – such as the Qali Warma feeding programme for children in state schools – and with operational support via the National Civil Defence Institute, yet questions were still being raised about the true scope of this aid. This was taking place in a wider context where the soup kitchens – social organisations offering food to vulnerable populations at low cost, with the support of MIDIS – were closed, and where the media visibility of the *ollas comunes* was starting to increase, but they were not recognised by public policy as a group needing attention.

Towards the end of June 2020, the GRADE team sought to make contact with the MIDIS team responsible for the food programme and other emergency food distribution activities to offer our support, in line with the start of the project funded by the IDRC. Arranging a meeting with them was no easy task, given the enormous pressure they found themselves under at the time. However, thanks to our previous work with both the MEF and the Ministry of Defence at the beginning of the pandemic, we managed to schedule an appointment a few weeks later. Our initial approach was essentially based on offering our technical and analytical assistance to improve the measures that were either already in operation or were in the process of being designed, instead of looking to present them with our specific research agenda. The request for support entailed producing a quick survey to characterise the current situation of the soup kitchens on a national level, with a view to designing specific support measures to enable them to reopen as soon as possible.

This was certainly an important task and work on the questionnaire began immediately. However, our previous experience of working in the city outskirts, coupled with our knowledge of social protection programmes, pointed us to the likelihood that many soup kitchens were no longer located in areas where the population was most in need of these spaces. The majority of kitchens were set up more than two decades ago and the horizontal sprawl of our cities has



meant that today's most vulnerable homes are located on the margins of this expansion (GRADE 2020).

To be able to prove this hypothesis, however, it was necessary to determine the location of the country's soup kitchens and compare this information with the available data on poverty and vulnerability levels. MIDIS had a soup kitchen database with incomplete location information, so we offered our assistance with the geographical referencing, starting with the capital. This new information, generated using an algorithm to map addresses and references to obtain coordinates, allowed us to demonstrate that the majority of soup kitchens were indeed located in more consolidated areas with medium socioeconomic levels on the outskirts of the city.

In addition to this discovery, it was necessary to identify the location of the *ollas comunes*, which were appearing in the news every day asking for some form of state support. Being temporary and self-managed initiatives, the *ollas* were not able to gain the recognition required to receive aid through public support programmes, and the MIDIS team did not have access to any formal mechanisms that would allow them to work with the *ollas*. It was clear that a deeper understanding of this new phenomenon of *ollas comunes* was necessary, and that other avenues of support should be explored.

These efforts coincided with a new political crisis that unfolded when the President of the Republic was removed from power on 9 November 2020 and the President of Congress took over the presidency. The latter had to contend with extreme citizen protests, and only managed to last for five days in power while a new transitional government was installed. This political instability, coupled with the continual changes in authorities and officials, made it all the more difficult to continue working with MIDIS on the tasks at hand.

## 2.2 Working with the MML

Thanks to the MML contacts established during the coordination of the TAYTA programme with the Ministry of Defence at the start of the pandemic, we discovered that a response to the food emergency had in fact been in place since August 2020. This first public initiative for *ollas comunes* involved the implementation of the programme known as Manos a la Olla (meaning 'Hands to the Pot'). This programme was geared towards working with the *ollas comunes* operating within the metropolitan area of Lima in four consecutive phases: recording their locations on a geo-referenced map, channelling donations to bolster their supplies, strengthening their offering via a training programme and, finally, carrying out an ongoing evaluation. The first phase sought to include the *ollas comunes* on a public register, indicating their location and other basic information relevant to being able to provide them with assistance. The second

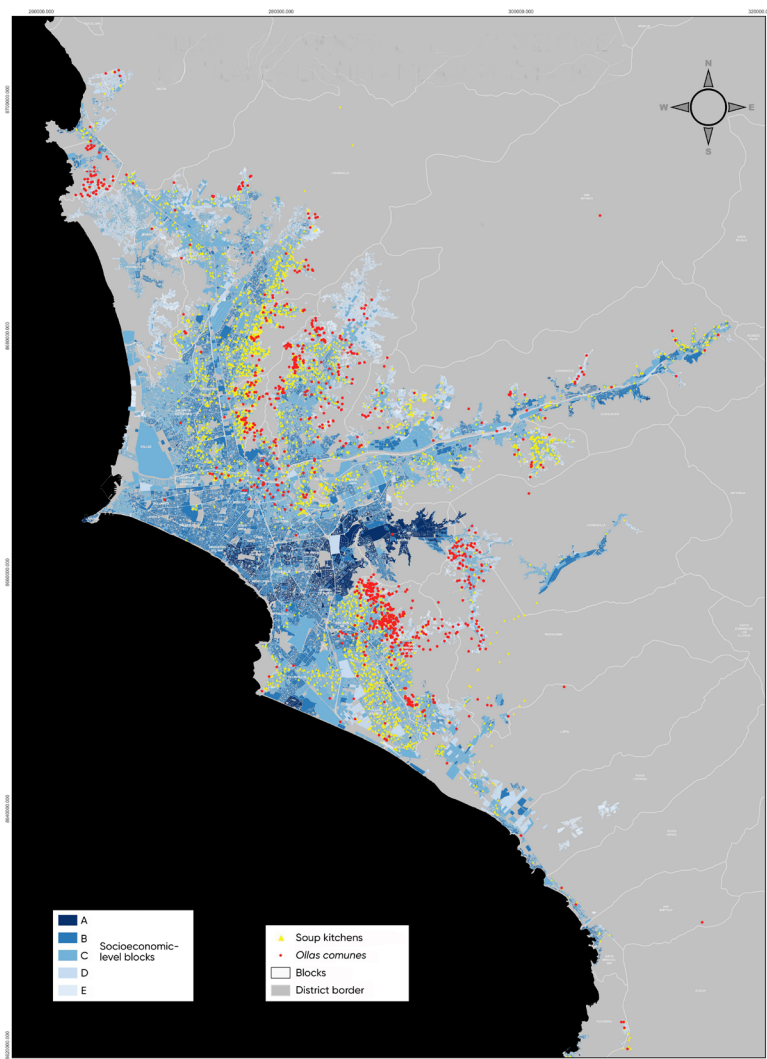
phase related to food management, which entailed securing donations for the registered *ollas* through sponsorship by private companies. The third phase was the training programme, which aimed to make the *ollas* legally competent and subsequently provide consultancy services to support their members in four key areas: nutrition, health, management, and organisation.

This initiative was led by the Gerencia de Participación Vecinal – Management of Neighbourhood Participation, a unit dedicated to promoting and coordinating neighbourhood initiatives in Peru – and our approach was once again centred around offering them our support in an open and flexible way, by first asking them what they needed before proposing what we considered to be important. In this way, after several conversations, we reached an agreement whereby we would support them in ordering and improving the *ollas* registration database and developing detailed protocol for any interventions. The first two actions proved to be very useful when it came to continuing our research process and gathering evidence in order to improve support for the *ollas comunas*. These are captured in the document by Alcázar and Fort (2022).

While the drafting of protocol was a specific requirement of the Gerencia, our support with this process led to the approval of Mayoral Decree No. 05 of 21 February 2021. Under this decree, a guide for replicating the Manos a la Olla programme (for the purposes of being rolled out by other local councils) was presented and the Gerencia was deemed responsible for advising and supporting any public or social institutions interested in implementing this programme. This guide, along with the lack of evidence regarding the locations of the *ollas comunas* in comparison with the soup kitchens, allowed us to get back in touch with MIDIS (now with a new minister, under a new government). By that time, MIDIS was also starting to explore new possible ways of working with the *ollas comunas*.

### 2.3 Returning to work with MIDIS

Towards the end of 2020, reports about the training and problems facing the *ollas comunas* in several areas across the outskirts of Lima were becoming increasingly frequent. At the beginning of 2021, and in line with the greater awareness of the key role played by the *ollas comunas* in food subsistence, the new central government – self-styled as the answer to dealing with the transition and emergencies – began to make changes in how the food crisis was handled. MIDIS attempted to include the *ollas comunas* among those parts of the population categorised as vulnerable to enable them to be provided with food parcels directly from local councils. In addition, it sought to carry out other regulatory modifications that would allow the *ollas* to benefit from social programmes.

**Figure 2 Location of *ollas* and soup kitchens in Lima by socioeconomic level**

Source Authors' own, created using QGIS

Predictably, the lack of identification and registration of the *ollas* significantly hindered progress in this regard. It was at this moment (in January 2021) that we sought to get back in contact with MIDIS to present the progress made through our work on the MML *ollas* database and the replication guide. This time it was far easier to schedule a meeting, given that we were offering information and analyses that were highly relevant to the Ministry. We also had a close connection with the new minister, who had worked with us previously on research activities in social sciences. During the first meeting, we presented this map (see Figure 2), which we produced using the information obtained on the location of soup kitchens and *ollas*. The map clearly shows that

the soup kitchens (yellow) tend to be found in more consolidated areas with medium socioeconomic levels (NSEs)<sup>3</sup> on the outskirts of the city, while the *ollas comunes* (red) have a more marked presence in the upper parts of the hills – that is, in the city's more inaccessible zones with low socioeconomic levels.

Following the initial meetings between the Mayor of Lima, the minister of MIDIS, and their respective teams, a framework cooperation agreement between both institutions was launched and collaborative work began to set up a single register of *ollas comunes* in the city of Lima, building on the existing MML database. During the five months when the transitional government was in power, the GRADE team worked with this group to develop what was known as the Coordinated Management Strategy for Food Support within the Framework of Covid-19, which comprised five components: (1) the registration of *ollas comunes* nationwide, (2) the identification and territorial coordination of the relevant representatives, (3) supporting *ollas comunes* via the channelling of donations and supplementary budgetary resources, (4) the formation of committees to aid monitoring and transparency throughout the process, and (5) strengthening the capacities of the *ollas comunes*.

Before the transitional government era came to an end in July 2021, MIDIS had already been in communication with the 1,874 local governments nationwide about Ministerial Resolution 086-2021-MIDIS – which approved the policy documents for the strategy – with the aim of identifying the main focal points and empowering them to take action. In addition, a pilot registration scheme began in 22 districts across the country, identifying a total of 2,261 *ollas comunes* that together hosted as many as 177,000 beneficiaries. While these steps, alongside the creation of several transparency and monitoring committees, did enable better food support for those who relied on these *ollas*, a further change in government hindered this initiative's rate of progress.

Fortunately, a large part of the MIDIS team responsible for these tasks<sup>4</sup> was ratified by the new government, which permitted them to make crucial progress in 2022 when it came to implementing the proposed strategy. That same year saw the implementation of a formal registration scheme for *ollas comunes* nationwide, backed by local governments. The scheme is known locally as Mankachay Perú (or '*Mi ollita Perú*', meaning 'My little pot Peru') and is available for public access.<sup>5</sup> The register holds information on over 3,300 active *ollas* with more than 220,000 beneficiaries. Furthermore, 92 different transparency and monitoring committees (officially known as a Comité de Transparencia y Acompañamiento or CTA) have been established nationwide, and more than 3,200 *ollas* have been granted discount vouchers to purchase gas. In June 2022, PEN 96m was also allocated, via an emergency decree, for the purchase of food destined directly for the *ollas comunes* listed on this register.

Backed by a small number of committed members of congress, the community leaders of the *ollas* fought tirelessly and, in April 2022, their efforts were rewarded when the Congress of the Republic passed a law that recognised and supported the *ollas comunes* at state level. This law also took into consideration many aspects of the strategy developed by MIDIS with the support of GRADE (Congress of the Republic 2022). Furthermore, in June of the same year, MIDIS then approved the regulations for this law (MIDIS 2022). While these initiatives represent significant progress in the recognition and support of the vital work carried out by the *ollas comunes*, they also contain a number of proposals that are far from straightforward to implement and still require several adjustments. With the goal of continuing to discuss possible ways to improve the implementation of the law, on 16 August 2022 we joined forces with congress members Susel Paredes and Kira Alcarraz to organise an event in the Congress of the Republic to present the results of our research and discuss these possible improvements.

In addition, as part of the project in collaboration with the IDRC, we worked with the Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP) research centre to identify similar phenomena in the form of community strategies aimed at tackling the fight against hunger in other countries in the region, with the ultimate aim of finding common ground to further our learning and future work. On 22 November 2022, the results of our studies on these initiatives in Peru, Uruguay, and Chile were presented during a virtual discussion, which was attended by various representatives from the *ollas comunes* in these countries as well as those responsible for public policy in each country (GRADE 2022).

### **3 Lessons learnt: how our research helped shape a rapid response**

In this article, we have sought to combine the story of the resurgence of the *ollas comunes* during the pandemic, along with their needs and state support initiatives, with the process followed by GRADE in offering its support to the institutions that were looking to improve access to food for the most vulnerable population groups. A common thread to both these stories, perhaps, is the ability to adapt quickly, which is crucial when it comes to achieving objectives in the face of uncertain and changing situations.

In terms of our traditional research processes, that means understanding that producing evidence quickly is vital to guide better decision-making. In many cases, this involves relaxing the rigorous methodological criteria, while still adhering to a minimum standard that allows useful and appropriate recommendations to emerge. Furthermore, this evidence must be communicated in a different way to that of a traditional approach: a way that means it is able to more easily reach a wide audience in need of persuasion. In our case, for example, a simple map like the one presented in Figure 2 can be a far more useful way of

demonstrating the need for specific policies tailored to the areas where the *ollas comunes* are located, compared to the usual discussions and hypothesis testing seen in academic articles. Shared knowledge was a useful tool when it came to quickly addressing the needs that arose out of the Covid-19 crisis, providing targeted information about both the requirements and the potential of the *ollas comunes*, and contributing to finding better ways of supporting them. The research was based on a rapid analysis of secondary information – through the use of maps, for example – and the generation of primary information by means of qualitative fieldwork carried out by the institution's experts. Any shared knowledge must not only be practical and appropriate, but also reliable: a balance that is built over time spent working in research and gaining both recognition and experience.

It is also clear, though, that together with this sense of urgency when it comes to producing evidence, a great deal of flexibility is required to adapt to the needs of the decision makers against the backdrop of this crisis. Effective liaison cannot be established by seeking to impose what the researcher considers necessary in the way of support, but rather by being willing to listen and identify both the challenges and necessary support measures in a collaborative way. In turn, this involves being prepared to offer support that may go beyond our own research objectives, but that can contribute to forging links and gaining allies.

However, this strategy is only possible if this same flexible approach also underpins the relationship between the researchers and those funding their project. It was vital that the IDRC understood that, when it came to devising research proposals and action plans, very few people in the world could imagine the sheer magnitude and duration of this pandemic and its consequences. As a result, constant adaptation throughout the process was required. The biannual project reports submitted to the IDRC helped to explain these deviations from the initial proposal, as well as the required changes in time frames or even in those working on the project team.

This last point has proved to be particularly important in the case we are recounting here. While the women from the *ollas comunes* have managed to broaden their relationships with various public and private representatives in order to gain support, our team was always on hand to identify opportunities to work with not just one but all of the different institutions involved in the objectives that have been set out. In this way, faced with unforeseen changes in both people and priorities within these institutions, it was always possible to turn to others to ensure continued progress in the tasks required to reach these goals.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the impacts of research are often accumulative and can take some time to become

apparent. It is clear that a large part of everything that has been achieved during this experience was possible thanks to GRADE's previous work carried out over many years, which spanned several aspects relevant to food security, social programmes, and other fields, and which gave the team the knowledge and reputation needed to approach the authorities with credibility. GRADE has a team of multidisciplinary researchers who are not only focused on generating rigorous applied knowledge but also constantly seeking to stay close to public policy through their temporary involvement in high-level public positions, be it through advisory and consultancy roles, or contributions during consultation meetings, events, or via the media. As soon as the pandemic began, the GRADE researchers provided tailored support for various public initiatives aimed at controlling the emergency and improving the state response. This vital support is proof of that work and it also contributed to opening up opportunities for collaboration in this specific situation. The efforts, failings, and achievements that emerged from the experience of working during the Covid-19 crisis also left a legacy of the many lessons learnt: from opportunities provided by the virtual world to create and share knowledge, to ways to come together and collaborate with public officials to gather evidence and provide appropriate, practical, and reliable knowledge.

### Notes

\* This *IDS Bulletin* was produced as part of the Covid-19 Responses for Equity (CORE) Knowledge Translation Programme, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), which supports the translation of knowledge emerging from the CORE initiative. Supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), CORE brings together 20 projects to understand the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, improve existing responses, and generate better policy options for recovery. The research is being led by local researchers, universities, thinktanks, and civil society organisations across 42 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors, or IDS. For further information, please contact: [c19re.org](http://c19re.org).

- 1 Ricardo Fort, Senior Researcher, Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo [Group for the Analysis of Development] (GRADE), Peru.
- 2 Lorena Alcázar, Senior Researcher, GRADE, Peru.
- 3 Socioeconomic levels (known as NSEs (*niveles socio económicos*) in Peru) are categories used in Peru to classify homes according to their level of income, based on census information and home surveys. The highest level is A and the lowest is E.
- 4 In particular, the Director of Supplementary Welfare Benefits and her team.
- 5 **Mankachay Perú webpage.**

## References

- Alcázar, L. and Fort, R. (2022) *Resiliencia en tiempos de pandemia: el caso de las ollas comunes en Lima, Perú* [Resilience in the Time of a Pandemic: The Case of the Ollas Comunes in Lima, Peru], Avances de Investigación 41, Lima: Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo (GRADE)
- Alcázar, L.; Rojas, V. and López de Romaña, E. (2021) *Medidas de protección social del gobierno peruano en época de COVID-19* [Social Protection Measures Implemented by the Peruvian Government During COVID-19], Lima: United Nations Children's Fund
- Aparicio, M.J.; Bilbao, S.; Saenz Valenzuela, M. and Barán Attias, T. (2020) 'Entre barbijos, ollas populares y grupos de WhatsApp: mujeres, salud y cuidados ante el COVID-19 en los barrios del Gran Buenos Aires, Argentina 2020' [Amongst Chinstraps, Soup Kitchens and WhatsApp Groups: Women, Health and Caregiving Against COVID-19 in Poorer Neighbourhoods of Suburban Buenos Aires, Argentina 2020], *Tessituras: Revista de Antropología e Arqueología* 8.1: 279–301
- Ayuda en Acción, CESVI, Helvetas, Hivos and Welthungerhilfe (2020) **Informe Perú: Global Hunger Index. October 2020** (accessed 27 March 2023)
- Blondet, C. and Montero, C. (1995) *Hoy: Menú popular: los comedores en Lima* [Today: Popular Menu: Soup Kitchens in Lima], Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos and United Nations Children's Fund
- Congress of the Republic (2022) '**Ley que reconoce las ollas comunes y garantiza su sostenibilidad, financiamiento y el trabajo productivo de sus beneficiarios, promoviendo su emprendimiento**' ['Law that Recognises the Ollas Comunes and Guarantees their Sustainability, Financing and the Productive Work of their Beneficiaries, Promoting their Entrepreneurship'], Law No. 31458, *El Peruano* (accessed 14 April 2023)
- Defensoría del Pueblo (2020) **Entrega de Bonos a Hogares en el Contexto de la Emergencia Por la Covid-19: Dificultades y Recomendaciones** [Delivery of Vouchers to Households in the Context of the Covid-19 Emergency], Lima: Defensoría del Pueblo (accessed 14 April 2023)
- El Peruano* (2021) '**Operación Tayta: Ayuda para los más vulnerables**' ['Operation Tayta: Help for the Most Vulnerable'], 4 March (accessed 14 April 2023)
- FAO, IFAD, WHO, WFP and UNICEF (2021) *Versión resumida: El estado de la seguridad alimentaria y la nutrición en el mundo 2021* [Summarised Version: The Global State of Food Security and Nutrition in 2021], Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Health Organization, World Food Programme and United Nations Children's Fund
- Fort, R. and Espinoza, Á. (2020a) '**COVID-19: Luchando contra el virus desde el territorio**' ['COVID-19: Fighting the Virus from the Territory'], *El Comercio*, 8 April (accessed 14 April 2023)



- Fort, R. and Espinoza, Á. (2020b) '**¿Qué hacemos con los mercados?**' ['What Do We Do with the Markets?'], *El Comercio*, 1 May (accessed 14 April 2023)
- GRADE (2022) **Seminario internacional Estrategias comunitarias contra el hambre en pandemia: experiencias de Perú, Chile y Uruguay** [International Seminar Community Strategies against Hunger in a Pandemic: Experiences from Peru, Chile and Uruguay], Lima: GRADE (accessed 14 April 2023)
- GRADE (2020) **Mapeo y tipología de la expansión urbana en el Perú** [Mapping and Typology of Urban Expansion in Peru], Lima: GRADE (accessed 14 April 2023)
- Hardy, C. (2020) *Hambre + Dignidad = Ollas Comunes* [Hunger + Dignity = Ollas Comunes], Santiago: LOM Ediciones
- INEI (2021) **Encuesta Nacional de Hogares – ENAHO** [National Household Survey], Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (accessed 6 March 2023)
- MIDIS (2022) **MIDIS aprobó Reglamento que reconoce a las ollas comunes como organizaciones sociales de base y garantiza su financiamiento** [MIDIS Approved Regulation that Recognises Ollas Comunes as Grass-roots Social Organisations and Guarantees their Financing], Lima: Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, Government of Peru (accessed 14 April 2023)
- Ministry of Defence (2020) **Gobierno inicia Operación TAYTA para proteger a la población vulnerable ante COVID-19 en zonas de riesgo** [Government Starts Operation TAYTA to Protect the Vulnerable Population Against COVID-19 in Risk Areas], press release, 1 June (accessed 14 April 2023)
- Santandreu, A. (2021) *Ayuda humanitaria para la emergencia alimentaria* [Humanitarian Aid Tackling the Food Emergency], Lima: Ecosad and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

This page is intentionally left blank