

# Governance and everyday risk in the heart of Lima



Autores: Alexander Stone (corresponding author), Nicolle Aspee Quiroga, Fadumo Mohamed, Milimer Morgado, Federica Risi, Melissandre Varin, Jean-Baptiste Vincent and Alicia Winter

- This research aimed at understanding the relation between everyday risk and urban development in the district of El Agustino.
- Three areas of focus were identified: housing and land, water and shared spaces.
- Strategies to disrupt risk cycles were developed based on workshops, focus groups, and interviews.
- The success of these strategies relies on a strengthened local governance, forming an integrated vision.
- Improved recognition of residents' needs in El Independiente and Santa Isabel, as in the neighbouring settlements, would potentially lead to more inclusive, equitable barrios.

As Lima seeks to be recognised as a 'world-class city', the central district of *El Agustino* remains as yet largely excluded from this vision. Within the district, the settlements of *Santa Isabel* and *El Independiente* still lack adequate recognition from authorities, despite over 60 years of history as some of the city's first informal occupations. Characterised by reduced access to basic services, poor housing structure, and extreme topography, their inhabitants experience increased exposure to daily risks, whilst simultaneously having to endure reduced coping capacities. This paper summarises the historical and spatial factors that influence how risk is experienced in the district. It then goes on to identify transformative strategies in three key areas – Housing, Water, and Shared Space – including the actors involved, opportunities for change and recommended actions. Finally, this paper places hope in the ability of stronger and better-equipped local governance to achieve transformative change and a more inclusive, safer environment.

## Reflecting on the past and building on the present for a brighter future

El Agustino, located in the east-central part of the city, is the product of a series of urban agglomerations, starting in the mid-1940s. Migrants were primarily attracted to the area's flat zones in view of employment opportunities available at 'La Parada' market, established in 1945. Over time these *pueblos jóvenes* (new settlements) continued to occupy land, and the upper slopes eventually became informally urbanised. The district gained recognition as a political entity in 1965, when Law No. 15353 declared the 'creation of *El Agustino*' (CENCA, 2004). However, the Ley Orgánica de Barrios Marginales (Peripheral Settlements Act) was passed in 1965, providing for the "remodelling, sanitation and legalisation" of settlements formed before 1960. As a result, not all households in El Agustino were included, with some still lacking formal recognition.

The pattern of urbanisation followed by El Agustino was accompanied by the formation of various neighbourhood associations, in response to the lack of basic services.

Subsequently, local governance initiatives such as MIADES (Micro Áreas de Desarrollo) in the 1940s sought to renovate areas of informal occupation in the district by coordinating the efforts of the numerous neighbourhood organisations through participa-

tory planning and budgeting. However, due to a political shift at the municipal and central level, the project was eventually abandoned (Tanaka, 1999; Schonwalder 1998).

High population density and a combination of precarious housing and extreme topography are compounded by the lack of access to basic services and of recognition at multiple scales, thereby exposing residents to a host of socio-environmental risks at various levels of intensity. These are reinforced and perpetuated by social factors associated with poverty traps, which unevenly impact the wellbeing of residents depending on their location, age, and gender. In particular, the most recent settlers, mainly located

in the upper zones, continue to experience reduced access to basic services, which results in greater exposure to daily risk along with limited coping mechanisms.

## Everyday risks in El Agustino

Everyday risks are generally defined as extensive and recurrent low intensity conditions that may be exacerbated by poverty and unjust urban environments (Lavell et al, 2003). In our case study areas, we define everyday risk as:

A combination of physical and social risks arising from a set of environmental drivers including housing structure, extreme topography, and lack of access to basic services, re-

**Figure 1.** Where do children play? One of the few playgrounds in El Independiente



inforced and perpetuated by social factors associated with poverty traps. These manifest on a daily basis at different scales and unevenly impact the wellbeing of residents depending on location, age, and gender.

Transect walks and workshops revealed how physical risks resulting from poor housing structures, humidity, crumbling stairs, uncollected waste, and reduced access to water negatively impact residents' daily lives. Paradoxically, while risks related to the built environment were often internalised, the community identified insecurity and crime as the most urgent issues they face.

Residents of the upper parts of the slopes face extensive risk traps. Additionally, we found women and children to be the most vulnerable, in part because they spend the majority of their time at home and are themselves more exposed within the neighbourhood to both well-documented physical risks as well as less tangible risks related to socio-environmental degradation and crime.

During the workshops, women explained how in the upper zones they felt 'invisible' to municipal authorities – without access to water, no waste collection, no *Vaso de Leche* (a national programme to support infant development), no *Comedores* (communal kitchens), and an absence of police presence. Along with access to localised health and safety-related services, women also felt their needs were not being taken into account by the *Junta Directiva* (community leaders organisation).

Through creative mapping and other visual and oral collection techniques, workshop participants were able to illustrate the alternative routes they had to take so as to avoid both crime and deteriorated environments, as well as drawing their ideal neighbourhood. Lack of access to safe, clean and suitable spaces for socialising, and the link between these conditions and anti-social behaviour, was the most frequent issue raised in these workshops, something that was subsequently confirmed in interviews with institutional actors. These findings led to the creation of the following potential channels for transformative change.

## Vision

The shared vision, built through secondary research, transect walks, interviews, and workshops with residents of El In-

dependiente and Santa Isabel, views El Agustino as an inclusive, safe, and healthy district *para todos* (for all), where residents are finally fully recognised as citizens of Lima. To achieve this, existing risks and struggles need to be recognised at the district as well as wider metropolitan level. Failing this, public and private negligence would continue to exacerbate the risk traps affecting the residents.

The potential for local governance institutions to act as a mediator between communities and municipalities has been identified as key to the success of the following strategies.

With the aim of designing strategic solutions that are both specific to our case study and scalable to the wider district and Metropolitan scales, the proposed opportunities for transformative change are informed by work carried out at these different scales.

Specific recommendations for action will be now addressed. The critical areas of housing, water, and shared space in El Agustino have been targeted as sine qua non first steps to achieving this vision, and are linked to each other through local governance mechanisms.

## Land and housing

As revealed by interviews with the Institute for Civil Defence (INDECI), the NGO Servicios Educativos El Agustino (SEA), and the District Government for Health (GODISA), there are critical linkages at play between housing, land tenure and health in El Agustino. The combination of high population density, unstable construction and insecure land tenure makes residents more vulnerable to risks such as episodic landslides, the collapse of houses, and the contraction of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis (TB).

In order to allow El Agustino to become a more resilient district, where vulnerable groups are empowered in their capacities to cope with everyday risks, the following lines of action should be embarked upon.

By exploiting existing projects undertaken by the local municipality and other organisations (listed below), more inclusive planning processes for decision-making may be established. The municipality is therefore encouraged to:

1. Adhere to the action plans of the 'Dis-

aster Risk Management Project' led by INDECI and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. Make use of technical and spatial information produced by the network *Red de Mujeres*, SEA, and the project developed by OFDA, USAID, INDECI, UNDP, in order to comply with "Goal 16" designed by the Ministry of Finance (MEF) and receive their allocated funding. The project's budget can then be used to reinforce areas at greater risk, for example, by installing retention walls.

3. Mobilise to acquire land tenancy for residents, an essential requirement to access the 'bono de reforzamiento estructural' (structural reinforcement allowance) offered by the national fund 'Fondo Mi Vivienda'.

4. Join the re-emerging association of 'Cerros Unidos' in its call for a programme of urban renewal that aims to recognise the right to safe and secure housing, and the potential associated with securing legal tenure.

## Water

Despite the location of SEDAPAL's headquarters in El Agustino and the fact that its reservoirs overlook these settlements, many residents experience a reduced service, amounting to four hours per day, with some having as little as one hour's service. This inequitable water provision places extra psychological and physical burdens on residents, along with additional everyday risks. Inaction in addressing existing problems and a lack of continuity in planning across political terms of office have led to incomplete upgrading projects and a general mistrust of SEDAPAL. Achieving a more equitable water system requires recognition of residents' status as citizens, as well as customers, acknowledging their limited access to water, and a commitment from all actors that the situation ought to be improved. This would involve improved access to better quality water, with tariffs and prices based on socio-economic criteria and accurate levels of consumption. Existing plans to further privatise SEDAPAL create an undercurrent of fear concerning increased prices, a lower quality of service, and reduced accountability.

In order to achieve the above, the following recommendations are made:

1. Improved communication between SEDAPAL, Juntas Directivas and residents should be established, allowing for pre-emptive actions before disasters occur, such as

the loss of life due to water-related illnesses.

2. Increased transparency is needed regarding future projects such as the possible installation of water meters by SEDAPAL.

3. Invite engineers from SEDAPAL and members of Cerros Unidos to the existing *Mesas de Concertación* to agree on future plans, based on the most urgent needs of these settlements, including a commitment to continuity.

4. Establish links with other districts and community groups struggling for improved access to water, for example, by taking part in the campaign for amending the Constitution to include water as a human right.

### Shared spaces

Unplanned urbanisation of the hills through self-building in El Agustino has resulted in a struggle for shared, and in particular, open space. Examples of shared spaces include stairs, passages, playgrounds and roads.

The negative impacts of reduced access to shared space, which is also poorly maintained, have long been established. Our research revealed that residents associate the reduced number of shared spaces and their poor physical state with increased anti-social behaviour as well road accidents, pollution and poor sanitation. Studies have also identified links with a high incidence of TB.

In order to revitalise shared spaces in the district, by making them safer and more inclusive, it is imperative to develop an integrated action plan that emphasises renewal. Given the scarcity of available land efforts should be directed towards improving existing spaces, rather than creating additional areas.

Considering a commitment to this vision expressed by SEA and the shared responsibility of the municipalities of Lima and El Agustino regarding the management of open space, the integrated action plan recommends the following:

1. Improve coordination between the Juntas Directivas and municipal departments.

2. Include shared spaces and green areas in the *Mesas de Concertación*, as their current status and use relates to topics already under discussion for improving health and reducing violence.

3. Promote greening initiatives, such as that implemented by 'Ocupa tu Calle' and the programme 'Barrio Mio', while identifying suitable contractors such as *Servicio de Recuperación de Espacios Públicos* (Service for the Recovery of Public Spaces) or REP.

4. Develop integrated plans with agreed time frames, budgets, and responsibilities, rather than implementing isolated projects.

## Local governance

### Box 2: Diversity in the barrios

The membership of the Junta Directiva, and those attending monthly assemblies, is not currently representative of the populations of the settlements. As such, the range of views regarding the future of the settlements, for example, the proposed Teleferico, are not fully represented. Presently, Juntas Directivas members, are mainly men between the ages of 50 and 60, for example Independent's general Junta consists of 10 men and only 2 women, without youth representatives. Diversifying Juntas Directivas composition will ensure a true reflection of people's needs which can lead to more informed policies.

Considering local governance as bringing together the strategies drawn up for housing, water, and shared spaces, this section will further explore requirements, actors and opportunities.

The Juntas Directivas, local organisations such as SEA and Red de Mujeres, as well as national bodies including INDECI and SEDAPAL, are all to some extent responsible for managing risk in El Agustino.

These actors and the work they carry out are often disconnected, uncoordinated and invisible to higher-level decision-makers, resulting in incomplete projects and inefficient services, thus perpetuating risk cycles.

Improved recognition does not only offer benefits by increasing the efficiency of governance processes. Recognition can be transformative in itself, by empowering residents and improving confidence among historically marginalised groups.

Written commitments, such as the *Pacto de Gobernabilidad*, and the local mayor's presence at important events for the communities, reflect a close relationship with the settlements and an engagement with their development. This relationship can be seen as an opportunity to push for greater recognition, and hence greater support, from the municipalities of Lima and El Agustino.

Existing platforms for dialogue, such as the *Mesas de Concertación*, which bring together relevant local and national actors, are key to raising awareness regarding the needs of the settlements, and ultimately their recognition

### Box 1: Integrated vision

**Ordenanza No. 525:** the Municipality of Lima is responsible for preserving and increasing the green areas of the city, and the Municipality of El Agustino, in charge of direct implementation at the district level.

**PLAM Lima y Callao 2035:** expressed desire of achieving 'a metropolitan system of public spaces and green areas meant as areas to gather for the community'.

**SEA:** greener and greened passages and stairs as a way of revitalising communal spaces.

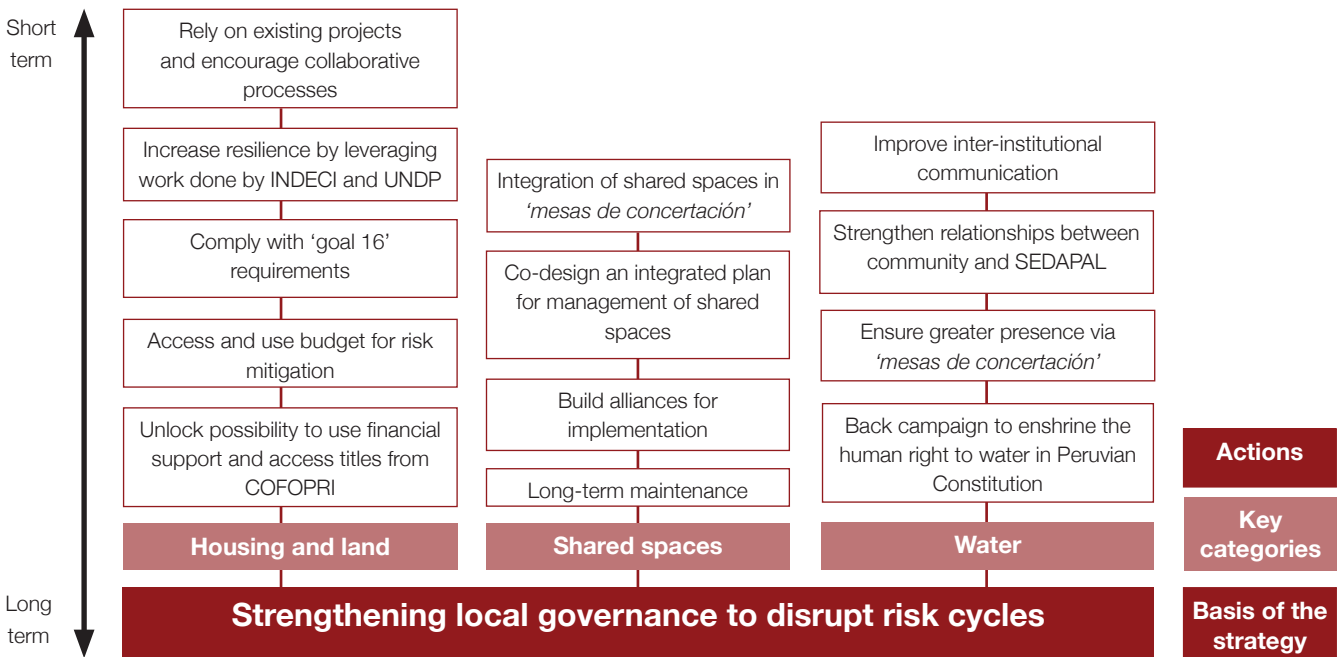
**Figure 2.** Leaders and the district mayor in Santa Isabel's anniversary celebration



**Figure 3.** Children from Jorge Basadre school in mapping workshop



Figure 4. The pillars of transformative change for El Agustino.



**Box 1: The right to the city**

Projects, such as the proposed cable car, are aimed at presenting Lima as a world-class city, rather than meeting citizens' urgent needs, which is why activating the right to the city through recognition is important

The right to the city through the recognition of:

- Existence – Santa Isabel and El Independiente and their inhabitants have more than 60 years of history in central Lima and are an important part of the city.
- Goods and bads, strengths and weaknesses, and desires as well as needs.
- Participation- freedom for the population be part of decision-making processes.
- Urban democracy- democratization of governance at different scales and to engage effectively in decision-making processes.
- Common struggles- between and within districts Security of tenure, of open spaces, and of streets

**Acknowledgements**

We extend our gratitude to all the institutional actors, civil society groups and the women, men and children from El Agustino for their active and valuable participation in this initiative. We would also like to thank our local NGO partners (in alphabetical order), Andres Alencastre Calderon (independent consultant), Carlos Escalante Estrada from the Instituto de Estudios Urbanos- CENCA, Liliana Miranda Sara from Foro Ciudades para la Vida, Rossana Poblet Alegre (independent consultant), Silvia de los Rios from Centro de Investigación, Documentación y Asesoría Poblacional- CIDAP, Carmen Robles Aranade from Servicios Educativos el Agustino- SEA, Linda Zillbert Soto (independent consultant), the interns that joined each group as well as Etienne Von Bertrab as our DPU tutor, for their valuable contributions, knowledge and guidance.

**References**

• Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano CENCA (2004). La vivienda en los cerros de El Agustino. Serie: Estudio de casos emblemáticos. Lima, Peru:

CENCA, in collaboration with ASPERM, FIP, and OXFAM GB.

• Lavell, A., et. al. (2003). "Local risk management: notions and precisions on concepts and practice". Geneva, Switzerland: Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC) and United Nations Development Program (PNUD).

• Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima MML (1961). Ley Organica de los Barrios Marginales. Ley No 13517.

• MML (2003). "Regimen de Intangibilidad, Protección, Conservación, Defensa y Mantenimiento de las Áreas Verdes de Uso Publico de Lima Metropolitana". Ordenanza No. 525.

• MML (2012). Plan Regional de Desarrollo Concertado de Lima 2052 - 2029. Lima Somos Todos. Lima, Peru: Instituto Metropolitano de Planificación IMP.

• MML (2015) Plan Metropolitano de Desarrollo Urbano de Lima y Callao PLAM 2035. Lima, Peru: IMP.

• Schonwalder, G. (2010). Linking Civil Society and the State: Urban Popular Movements, the Left, and the Local Government in Peru, 5980-5992. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press.

**Contacts**

**MSc Environment and Sustainable Development**

Adriana Allen: a.allen@ucl.ac.uk

Rita Lambert: rita.lambert@ucl.ac.uk

Corresponding author: Alexander Stone, alexander.stone.14@ucl.ac.uk

Images by authors unless another source is indicated.

