



AS IT IS

Peru's Soup Kitchens Struggle with Inflation

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In the hilly slums of Peruvian capital Lima, soup kitchens provide free food to some of the nation's poorest people. Recently, however, they have had to cut proteins like meat substantially as the cost of food climbs.

Now, workers at the soup kitchens are telling those they serve not to look for chicken in the chicken soup.

"For us as soup kitchens, chicken has ceased to exist," said Jenifer Mondalgo, president of a soup kitchen group in the Pamplona Alta area. "The rise in prices is huge."

Soup kitchens serve meals to the needy. The food is either free or provided at a very low price. But the war in Ukraine has **disrupted** fertilizer and food supplies, causing inflation.

For years, Lima soup kitchens have offered lunch at 1 sol, about 27 cents. But now community leaders have been forced to raise the price to 1.5 soles.

Mondalgo said they have sought free bones, skins or other parts at the market so that they can serve at least a little animal protein.

In the poor neighborhood of Pamplona Alta, people even look for food in the **trash**.

Peru's inflation is at its highest in 25 years, affecting food prices more than other goods. The high prices have already brought nationwide protests that have left the government trying to find ways to cut costs.

Peruvian President Pedro Castillo wants to drop sales tax on some foods to help lower costs. But he is still debating the issue with the country's Congress.

Peru has also raised the **minimum** wage by 10 percent and offered to help with the cost of cooking gas for the poor.

"Things like vegetables and potatoes used to be **cheap**. Now they are **super expensive**," said Elena Rodriguez who lives in Pamplona Alta. "I don't know what to do anymore."

Recently, a soup kitchen in Pamplona Alta served rice and vegetables with an increasingly rare treat: chicken soup. The chicken bones came from a donation at the market earlier in the day.

The Peruvian government says vegetable oil has increased 50 percent in the past year. That has forced poor Peruvians to find other sources for cooking oil. Some reuse animal fats left from earlier meals.

"If soup kitchens ceased to exist, our lives would be terrible," said Maria Sanchez. She spends almost 200 soles a month at her local soup kitchen to feed lunch to her family of six.

"We wouldn't know what to buy because everything is so expensive at the market."

I'm Jill Robbins.

Reuters reported this story from Lima, Peru. Hai Do adapted the story for Learning English.

Words in This Story

disrupt - v. to interrupt the normal or activity

trash - n. something that is thrown away

minimum - adj. lowest possible amount

cheap - adj. not costing a lot

expensive - adj. cost a lot of money
