**Core Document 20**

 **Early Childhood Program**

**Building Societies for All *Concept 2 Promoting Equity: ECP Engagement in Peru***

**Discussion Paper Produced for a Portfolio Review by the ECP Advisory Board**

**June 27th, 2014**

This portfolio review explores the Early Childhood Program (ECP) engagement in Peru at a time when ECP staff is questioning whether or not to continue to work there, as a result of multiple changes in key personnel and likely in strategy at the Ministry of Social Inclusion (MIDIS), the ECP’s key partner. In one sense this is the ideal time to conduct this review, as the ECP team is developing the 2015 budget and workplan and a decision about whether to include funding for work in Peru is imminent. On the other hand, the intentions of MIDIS are not fully clear – ECP has not established a working relationship with the new Ministry staff - making it difficult to be definitive. Nonetheless, staff has elected to put forwards this portfolio for review as a means of soliciting advice on a complex programmatic dilemma. It will be useful afterwards to reflect on the timing of such portfolio reviews.

1. ***Made in Peru:*  Inspiring a Locally-Developed Child Care Model for the Most Disadvantaged Children**

The Early Childhood Program (ECP) work in Peru was launched at the end of 2011, as a result of a request from the Latin America Program to explore opportunities to support the reforms of the newly elected, socially reform-minded government of President Humala. The ECP conducted an assessment visit in the last weeks of December and developed strategy options with the Latin America Program, local actors and relevant international agencies. The ECP recommended two approaches. The first was to focus on policy reform, creating linkages across Ministries to overcome gaps in services. For instance, the *Wawa Wasi* home-based child care program was serving children under 36 months, but community-based and formal preschool services generally were providing services only for children aged four and over. A second proposed option was to work with MIDIS and the Ministry of Education to create quality standards and shared methodological approaches across all services for children under 8. This would include work with the *Wawa Wasi* program, community-based preschools, formal preschools and primary schools. Emphasis would be placed on ensuring that these programs warmly welcome and serve Peru’s diverse children and families and provide opportunities for all children to develop to their fullest potential. However, though there was strong interest from MIDIS, the Ministry of Education was reluctant to engage. As a result, ECP opted not to pursue a policy initiative that would require intensive work with the Ministry of Education. Instead ECP agreed to support MIDIS to implement a new set of services, *Cuna Mas*, which would include centre-based programs, derived from the *Wawa Wasi* model and located in peri-urban areas, as well as a new home visiting program which would be implemented in rural areas for indigenous children. The aim was to extend programming to reach a large percentage of the more than 200,000 children under the age of three who live in extreme poverty in Peru.

MIDIS initially proposed that ECP help design and implement the home visiting component. ECP instead referred MIDIS to the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the IDB, which have greater experience in this area. However, ECP agreed to work with MIDIS to improve the quality of the *Wawa Wasi* program. A recent evaluation of the program by *Young Lives* had revealed that developmental outcomes of children in the *Wawa Wasi* program to a large extent did not differ from outcomes of similar children who do not attend the program.

Prior to establishment of a detailed workplan and agreement, at the request of MIDIS the ECP sent consultant Dawn Tankersley to Peru to help them develop quality principles for the new program. Working with a multi-disciplinary team, which included ECD experts as well as mother carers, MIDIS used the ISSA standards as a guide and developed with Dawn’s help a set of standards to support the improvement of the program. This ‘no-fuss’, responsive approach by ECP to the urgency expressed by MIDIS officials helped develop trust and professional respect.

Following these initial workshops communication lagged for a few months until Andrea Portugal, Executive Director of the *Cuna Mas* program, visited London in early summer 2012. The ECP hosted her for a day of discussions with Sally Grantham-McGregor, Dawn Tankersley, Hollie and Sarah in what turned out to be a turning point in the collaboration. Confused about how to proceed with improving the *Cuna Mas* program, Andrea had solicited bids from *Reggio Emilia* and the *Creative Curriculum*, offering to pay to import and adapt these programs in Peru. In response, the ECP laid out a series of options for engagement with MIDIS, ranging from co-development of a manual for 0-3 to development of a training and professional development framework (see appendix 1). In these discussions, the ECP took the position that Peru should draw on national expertise and resources to create a distinctly Peruvian child care program rather than importing models. The ECP offered intensive technical support and rights to use and adapt OSF trainings and resources for working with children under 3 years of age. These discussions gave Andrea confidence to develop a consolidated model that incorporated elements of the *Reggio Emilia* approach (care, environment, documentation, focus on children’s agency), elements of the Pickler approach from Hungary/Argentina (interactions) and experience from OSF ECP and ISSA (family and community engagement, supporting caregivers and staff to develop skills and attitudes to work with diverse populations, and developing strong training and mentoring skills amongst *Cuna Mas* coordinators). The goal of ECP’s involvement was to support MIDIS to develop an approach that was uniquely Peruvian, to support piloting of the new model, and to ensure that tools (standards, manual, trainings) and human resources (effective practitioners, program managers, trainers/mentors) needed to roll out a quality system nationwide were in place. Strategically, it was decided that the program would be piloted, assessed and then refined by five of the 30 national coordinating offices, with national scale up to follow. Scale-up would involve expanding the program to small batches of coordinating offices (five to eight at one time) at six month intervals. In a follow up visit, MIDIS surprised ECP by re-organizing this schedule, moving to full national scale up before the pilot was complete. Though ECP initially objected to scaling up without ensuring that a quality model was in place, it was impossible not to recognize the pressure faced by MIDIS to get to national scale fast. ECP reorganized trainings and technical support to accommodate rapid scale-up. MIDIS eventually also responded to ECP’s requests to increase the duration of training and mentor visits to regional coordinators responsible for scale-up. Thus, MIDIS and ECP accommodated one another.

ECP’s work in Peru has been underpinned by several assumptions, not all of which have been realized. First, the ECP’s engagement assumes MIDIS will fund all national implementation activities including all hardware (buildings, furniture/educational supplies) and software (staffing, trainings, operational costs), and secondly that OSF ECP will facilitate for MIDIS licenses to relevant OSF and ISSA materials and trust MIDIS to adapt them appropriately. These basic agreements have been sustained throughout the collaboration. However, based on experiences in Central Europe and Eurasia, ECP also assumed that MIDIS would assign and retain core staff necessary to implement the program, including a lead coordinator responsible for the collaboration with ECP. This has not been the case. Though ECP identified a team of four Spanish-speaking trainers who have worked consistently with the MIDIS for two years, the lead staff members at MIDIS responsible for piloting and training changed several times, each instance creating confusion and delay. Finally, in Fall 2013, after 2 years of excellent collaboration, both the Minister and Director of *Cuna Mas* left MIDIS. This time the confusion is palpable and persistent. ECP has been introduced via email to the new Director of *Cuna Mas*, but scheduled introductory calls have been cancelled several times. The current status of the relationship is in limbo. MIDIS staff responsible for international coordination and training has contacted ECP and we have asked them to send ECP a written description of what kind of support they are seeking.

Several features characterize ECP’s engagement in Peru. From the time that the OSF ECP entered Peru, the focus has been on providing technical assistance to the government generally, and to MIDIS specifically. Though ECP staff has met with a variety of NGOs, universities and ECD experts, we have refused opportunities to provide funding and technical assistance to these agencies. Strategically, this is because ECP’s engagement in Peru is not a field-building initiative, but an intentional engagement to respond to a government request for technical assistance. ECP has created a shared agenda with MIDIS and included this in OSF’s Concept on Equity, linking it conceptually with ECP’s similarly-focused work in Liberia. ECP staff has referred to these as ‘heavy-lifting’ programs that involve extensive diplomacy, technical assistance and flexibility to adapt to changing political contexts. They are fully operating programs, with less emphasis on grant-giving (none in the case of Peru).

1. **Paddington returns to Peru: ECP’s niche**

ECP has limited experience working in Latin America and the Caribbean and until recently boasted no Spanish speakers on staff. The ECP has implemented programs in Haiti (from 1997), Argentina and the Dominican Republic. The decision to engage in Peru was motivated by the request from the Latin America Program, which was representing the wishes of the OSF Chairman. Unlike many of the regions where ECP works, Latin America, in particular, has long embraced early childhood development. Programming in the region is rich and deep. Many experts from Peru are well-trained in early childhood and research, having received their education either in excellent national universities and/or in top universities in the US, UK and continental Europe. National policies may be politically-motivated, but they are also generally evidence-based, in order to fulfil requirements of the main investor, the Inter-American Development Bank. Robust evaluations exist for many ECD programs implemented in Latin America. These studies typically assess both about the impact/outcomes of programs as well as the costs/benefits. Economists play a definitive role in program design across the region.

ECP’s engagement in Peru was moderated by the Latin American Program and supported by OSF’s designated point person in Lima. In reality, this consisted of provision of political advice and support for logistics. However, relationships have had to be built with each Ministry and organization, as the Latin America Program has had little involvement in early childhood or education. Though the Ministry of Education staff met several times with ECP staff and have attended some of the MIDIS/ECP trainings, these connections are constrained by differences in philosophical approach. Universities and research institutions offer expertise and are generally very open for cooperation, and NGOs are innovative and eager to welcome new funders. Interestingly, Peruvian companies have a strong interest in corporate social responsibility with several companies contributing substantially to ECD programs. The Bernard van Leer Foundation has been active in Peru for over 30 years and staff has generously provided linkages to Ministry officials, NGOs and experts. A good exchange of information exists, particularly when OSF initiates contact. ECP staff have met and exchanged emails with IDB staff, but these contacts have not developed into strong relationships. Likewise, meetings with UNICEF and PLAN have been polite, but have not generated joint activity, largely because ECP staff has been able to visit Peru only once or twice annually. The majority of contact has been through the lead ECP consultant, Dawn Tankersley.

Because the engagement in Peru responds to a government’s request for collaboration and OSF interest in this, the ECP has not strategically approached Peru from a broader systems perspective that interrogates opportunities to strengthen civil society or to create, for instance, certificate or other individual professional development programs. ECP staffing constraints, which limit the ECP’s direct oversight of programming, and OSF’s lack of an office in Peru all contribute to a certain level of frustration.

1. **Adaptations, surprises, successes and disappointments**

Despite some of the frustrations described above, ECP’s engagement in Peru has been a hugely fulfilling professional experience. Piloting and implementing programming at scale requires expertise, substantial funding and political will. Frequently ECP works in contexts where only one of these three variables is in place. Rarely are two of these three conditions in place. In Peru all three requirements are in place. Though establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with MIDIS from a distance is a challenge, once this was established the program grew and flew. The team at MIDIS is fully committed to ensuring that each child has the right to develop to their fullest potential. MIDIS has developed a socially-oriented, equity-focused approach to designing and delivering services, which brings together several streams of thinking about child development. The Ministry is both practical and innovative. It is refreshing to work with them.

Yet there have been surprises and disappointments, several of which were noted above, and which are consolidated below:

* ECP’s first activity was to support MIDIS to develop professional standards, however, it became clear in the middle of a workshop that MIDIS needed program standards, rather than professional standards. The technical team working with ECP was able to accommodate this shift without missing a beat.
* After agreeing with ECP to a strategy and workplan which included a period for piloting and adaptation, MIDIS suddenly changed the game plan, shifting to a strategy of scaling rapidly. ECP followed suit, initially reluctantly, recognizing the pressure faced by MIDIS to scale up rapidly.
* Information flow and follow through with MIDIS is inconsistent. Several planned activities – for instance linking *Cuna Mas* with Ministry of Education programs in municipalities – have not been fully implemented. And ECP has had to track progress on refinement and validation of a new, jointly-developed monitoring tool remotely, via independent experts, not connected with MIDIS.
* Key staff at MIDIS has changed, in some cases multiple times. The most recent change (multiple changes of the Director, change in the Minister, changes in key coordinating staff) has left ECP in limbo.

In collaboration with MIDIS OSF has positively contributed to development of a uniquely Peruvian, quality model of community-based care for children under three. Strengths of our engagement have included the development of strong relationships and trust with the leadership of the *Cuna Mas* program, flexibility to adapt technical assistance and strategy to changing needs (this has largely been accomplished because the consultants working on the program have a wide ranging expertise and approach the work with MIDIS collaboratively), and the ability to offer valuable OSF and ISSA resources and top-notch technical support rapidly. High points of our collaboration included responding rapidly to MIDIS requests to develop standards and to scale up the program, and successfully encouraging MIDIS to develop a Peruvian model. Weaknesses have included limitations on time available for ECP to be more directly and regularly involved in program management and relationship building. Greater ECP involvement might have mitigated the impact of staffing changes at MIDIS, and could have led to closer cooperation with the IDB, Ministry of Education and Bernard van Leer Foundation, as well as with local NGOs and institutions.

The key challenge facing the program now is whether or not to continue work with the new leadership of *Cuna Mas*. The Bernard van Leer Foundation, which has in the past largely focused attention on the Ministry of Education, universities and NGOs, has refocused attention on MIDIS and children under 3. They have provided MIDIS with grant funding to improve program management and to increase the pace of scale-up through support to municipalities. The BvL grant to MIDIS envisions development of more flexible programs and a new set of standards. ECP has conflicting information about whether or not MIDIS will continue to implement the centre-based model jointly developed with ECP, though the latest information is that MIDIS is keen to do this. ECP is currently awaiting a proposal from the new team at MIDIS.

1. **The way forward**

It is too early to know if MIDIS will continue to pursue ECP support to improve the quality of their centre-based care programming for children under 3. Several questions for discussion are posed below:

* What factors should ECP consider when determining whether to continue collaboration with MIDIS? Are there any non-negotiable conditions? Internal considerations.
* Should ECP consider moving beyond support to the government to engage with universities and NGOs involved in developing training programs? Bernard van Leer staff suggests OSF ECP might collaborate with BvL and partners on this.
* Should ECP continue to engage in Peru after elections next year (note: it is likely the government will change)?

**Appendices:**

1. ECP offer to MIDIS June 2012

**Appendix 1**

**Menu of Options for Open Society Foundation Early Childhood Program (ECP) Support for the Ministry of Social Inclusion (MIDIS), Peru**

**DRAFT for DISCUSSION June 2012**

In response to discussions with Andrea Portugal, Director of Cuna Mas, the ECP has identified below potential areas for further collaboration. These ideas are quite preliminary and areas of mutual interest would need to be developed into a specific program of technical assistance in close cooperation with MIDIS staff. ECP would not charge MIDIS for provision of international expertise or for rights to use existing ECP materials; however, MIDIS would be expected to cover all in-country costs, including costs of Peruvian experts and staff, related workshops, production of printed manuals and materials, etc...

A ‘Made for Peru’ Methodology Guidebook: Creating Child-Centred Infant/Toddler Programs for Cuna Mas

* Adapt OSI’s ‘Creating Child-Centred Programs for Infants and Toddlers’ for Peru using a combination of Peruvian and international experts. Leadership for the adaptation would come from Peru and a core expert team, which would consist of experts from Casa Amarilla and Reggio on environments, observation and documentation, and caregiving routines; and experts from ECP on diversity and inclusion, individualization, working with families, and interactions. This volume will bring together best international practice, the new Cuna Mas Principles, the Cuna Mas image of the child, and core Cuna Mas program values. It will include variations in practices for different regions of Peru.
* Building a common training package to accompany the guidebook using adaptations of existing trainings from all experts and partners.
* Developing a cohort of trainers from across Peru, who can deliver training to Cuna Mas program staff and community mothers

Creating Family and Community Centres at the *Centres Integral*

* Support to build the resource and expert base at *Centres Integral*, to link both with families whose children attend Cuna Mas as well as those others in the community who do not. The Family and Community Centres – organized within a room in each *Centre Integral* and supported by staff at the centre- would be adapted to each community and could include a variety of activities, including: drop-in activities for mothers/fathers and infants/toddlers; lending library of toys, books and child development materials; opportunities for informal community meetings; scheduled educational activities, such as parenting groups, cooking classes, literacy activities with adults, health-focused sessions; serving as a dissemination point for basic child development, health information and social programs etc..
* ECP would suggest piloting such expanded centres in a specific number of sites and providing additional training for staff who will work in these centres on child development, working with adults (individually and in groups), connecting with diverse families, building on community strengths and reaching the hard to reach.

Strengthening Inclusion and Diversity in Peru\*

* Increasing among Cuna Mas staff the knowledge of, understanding of, and sensitivity to mechanisms that perpetuate systems of inequity, by providing a series of trainings. The training program would be delivered in cooperation with regional experts, who have been using these materials.
* Develop a cohort of Cuna Mas trainers who can deliver this training to Cuna Mas staff and more widely in Peru.
* Across the Cuna Mas service delivery staff, build the capacity to recognize and value the diversity that exists in children’s homes and communities and to incorporate this diversity into Cuna Mas programs and centres. This will consist of development of an adapted version of existing ECP/ISSA materials and would include cooperation with local NGOs such as Warmayllu.
* Across Cuna Mas service delivery staff, build capacity to recognize typical and atypical developmental patterns, to individualize approaches to support children’s developmental and social emotional competencies, and to recognize when additional professional advice and support is needed to ensure children can reach their full potential.

Principles for the Cuna Mas Program (could include development of a quality assurance system)\*

* Continue to support Cuna Mas to pilot the draft instrument in select centres. Further develop, adapt and validate the instrument, based on the piloting.

Professional Development Framework (Training/Mentoring/Certification)

* Provide training and support for identified staff, which will have the role of mentors in the Cuna Mas structures and which will enable the utilization of the Principles with community mothers to improve practices.
* Provide technical assistance to develop a framework to support professional development of Cuna Mas para-professionals. The system should include a method for identifying community mothers who are interested and able to progress through a professional development process to obtain a certificate and potentially additional higher education.

Supporting the Transition into Preschool\*

* Develop with Peruvian experts, including the NGO Kusi Warma, materials and practices to support transition of children from Cuna Mas into formal preschools and primary schools. It is suggested that these linkages should be built between pilot *Centres Integral* and neighbouring preschools and schools. This would include skilling up of a larger group of trainers capable of delivering this training to education and development professionals form these institutions.

\* Ideally, ECP would recommend extending these activities through formal preschool and early

primary in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.