***Early Childhood Program Portfolio Review: Peru***

***Public Summary***

**Date of review:** June 27th, 2014

**Participants:** Youssef Hajjar (Board Member), Phyllis Magrab (Board Member), Martin Woodhead (Board Member & Chair), Sally McGregor (Board Member), Sarah Klaus (Director), Tina Hyder (Deputy Director), Elaine Harty (Administrative Assistant), Hollie Hix-Small (Senior Program Manager), Almaz Ismayilova (Program Coordinator), Dragana Sretenov (Senior Program Manager), Dawn Tankersley (Consultant).

**Roles:** Martin Woodhead (Chair), Hollie Hix-Small and Sarah Klaus (ECP presenters), Dawn Tankersley (Consultant on the project) ECP staff and board (contributors through discussion)

**Rationale for Conducting the Portfolio review:**

The work in Peru is situated within ECP’s *Building Society for All, Promoting Equity through Early Childhood* concept within ECP’s 2014-2017 strategy. The Peru activities were selected for review for the following reasons: (1) the ECP team is engaged in developing the 2015 budget and work plan; (2) the team was questioning whether or not to continue work there, due to a number of changes in key personnel and strategy at the Ministry of Social Inclusion (MIDIS), ECP’s key partner; and (3) one of the ECP staff members involved in Peru will leave OSF in September 2014 necessitating the careful review of existing work and any future work.

**Background**

The ECP’s work in Peru was launched at the end of 2011, following a request from OSF’s Latin America Program to explore opportunities to support reforms led by the newly elected, social reform minded government of President Humala. ECP carried out an assessment visit in the last weeks of December and consulted with the Latin America program on strategy options, local actors and relevant international agencies.

Two approaches were recommended by ECP: 1) a focus on policy reform and/or 2) a close relationship with MIDIS and the Ministry of Education (although they were less cooperative) to create quality standards and shared methodological approaches. ECP explored the work of the existing *Wawa Wasi* home-based child care program, preschools and primary schools during the visit. MIDIS inherited the *Wawa Wasi* program, and reformed it into a new set of services, *Cuna Mas*, which included centre based programs located in peri-urban areas, and a home-visiting program that encompassed rural and indigenous communities. The main aim of *Cuna Mas* was to reach a large percentage of the more than 200,000 children under the age of three who live in extreme poverty in Peru. With ECP technical assistance funds, the assistance of consultant Dawn Tankersley and a multi-disciplinary team, MIDIS developed quality principles for the new program using the ISSA standards as a guide. The overall goal for ECP was to support MIDIS to develop an approach that was uniquely Peruvian, using national expertise; to support piloting and scale-up of the new model; and to ensure that the tools, trainings and personnel needed to roll out the system were in place. A core part of the work involved assisting MIDIS in training 900 staff at 30 coordination centres across the country. Pilots were launched in five regions and the program training was scaled up through cascade training and mentoring.

**Key Questions**

1. What factors should ECP consider when determining whether to continue collaboration with MIDIS? Are there any non-negotiable conditions? Internal considerations?
2. 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.
3. Should ECP continue to engage in Peru after elections next year, 2015 (note: it is likely the government will change)?

**Summary of Discussion**

Hollie Hix-Small gave a short presentation summarizing the work in Peru, with support from Sarah Klaus. Dawn Tankersley joined the meeting by video conference to provide a commentary before the review was opened to the board for further discussion. Board members had received an initiative overview document prior to the review. Sarah pointed out that ECP was requested to work with the government and specifically to work with MIDIS. MIDIS used ECP’s technical support, but directed it to align with their own vision, so that there was a specifically Peruvian element to the model. Participants discussed the achievements of the program to date, as well critically reflecting upon the limitations of the partnership with the Ministry, political pressures, and staffing and language constraints.

It was noted by Hollie, Dawn and Sarah that the work in Peru has been professionally satisfying as there is a combination of political will, capacity and funding in the country, as evidenced by the rapid rate of the scale-up. Some questions were raised about the quality of the work, which has been inconsistent, bearing in mind the huge turnover of leadership within MIDIS. The Bernard van Leer Foundation is now working alongside the Ministry and is pushing a decentralized model with MIDIS, shifting design of programs to the municipalities. Hollie thought that this new model conflicts in some ways with the system MIDIS set up in collaboration with OSF. It was felt that OSF is in limbo as the new MIDIS leadership has not indicated definitive interest in continuing the collaboration.

Input from the Board at this point mainly focused on how to handle the situation with the MIDIS, given their new partnership with the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. The political pressure to start scaling up rapidly would inevitably put pressure on the training infrastructure and quality. Sarah suggested that there should be a system whereby the pilot programs in a region must pass a standard before scaling up takes place. It was also noted that staffing would inevitably change as a direct result of the political situation.

Dawn commented on the inconsistency of information flow between actors on the program. She emphasized that a lot of knowledge had been passed on but much work is still to be done. Although MIDIS had moved programs from homes into crèches, bringing a lot of improvements, she felt that but there was still a lack of coordination. This view was supported by Hollie and Sarah.

A major discussion point was that of understaffing and training for the program. Dawn explained that she had worked on creating a process of quality assurance that would be used for mentoring and technical support, but ratings were ultimately directly linked to compensation. Dawn outlined how training was at a high level for mentors, but they have too many functions. Furthermore, the preschools and primary schools into which children from *Cuna Mas* transition are not set up to manage the diversity of children. After 36 months there is nowhere for children to go, as preschools enrol children over 48 months. Changing this requires more cooperation between MIDIS and the MoE. The Board suggested that more attention ought to be paid to the positive process of job creation. The Inter-American Development Bank is involved and both IDB and MIDIS are keen to expand beyond the 60,000 children reached so far.

Staff suggested leaving Peru with a really good manual, with strong capable trainers, and with the trainings written up and effective models that meet the standards. All agreed that it would be best to find a way to bring the work to a conclusion rather than carry on over the next year.

**Future plans/actions**

*Cuna Mas* may not last beyond the upcoming elections in 2015. ECP staff would recommend sending consultants there in future if the model is deemed worthwhile and if MIDIS is keen to consolidate the basic elements of the program, and it might be worth one last investment in technical assistance. If MIDIS, however, do seek to continue working with ECP, ECP should work on an exit strategy. As there is no national foundation operating in Peru, it is hard to monitor the situation.