

**Conditional Cash Transfers in Peru:  
Tackling the Multi-Dimensionality of Childhood Poverty and Vulnerability**

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of significant international attention on poverty reduction and realizing the Millennium Development Goals, social protection mechanisms are increasingly seen as an important policy tool to tackle poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.<sup>2</sup> Within the broad field of social protection, cash transfers are instruments attracting much interest and attention, and have been particularly pioneered in Latin America.<sup>3</sup> Peru, recently followed the example of Mexico, Chile, Brazil and Honduras by launching its first conditional cash transfer program, *Juntos* (“Together”), in February 2005. By targeting poor children under the age of 14 years, the aim is to promote human capital development and to help break life-course and inter-generational transfers of poverty by facilitating households’ capacities to ensure children’s rights to adequate nutrition, healthcare and education.<sup>4</sup>

Initially the announcement sparked opposition from various societal stakeholders, largely in part due to then President Toledo’s low popularity rankings and suspicions that the program would be used for clientelistic purposes in the pre-election period leading up to April 2006 national elections. Specific concerns included the government’s plan to implement the program simultaneously in rural and urban areas<sup>5</sup>, without having determined a clear targeting mechanism, and also a lack of involvement of key social and political actors represented in the country’s post-authoritarian National Accord.<sup>6</sup> Some analysts also argued that existing social programs should be restructured rather than initiating a new program. The government, however, countered that such cash transfer programs—whereby mothers receive a regular cash payment on the condition that they ensure their children access public education and health services and avail themselves other child-focused social programs—have been successful internationally. Moreover, they argued that there was evidence to suggest that direct cash subsidies were more effective than food subsidies and entailed lower operational costs. Following a congressional recommendation, *Juntos* was placed under a directorate named by the national Roundtable for Poverty Reduction<sup>7</sup> in order to guarantee the program’s neutrality and transparency, and to provide participation of the principle social sectors involved in shaping the direction of social policy. *Juntos* has since gained considerable legitimacy, due to a lack of politicization, a growing social consensus about the value of this innovative approach to social protection for the poorest emphasizing co-responsibility for social programs between citizens and the state, and the fact that the program is reaching some of the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population. In addition, there is recognition that *Juntos* is an attempt to address some of the particular vulnerabilities faced by populations that were most affected by the political violence (both by the Shining Path terrorist organization and state counter-terrorism) during the 1980s-2000.

This paper discusses the development and implementation of *Juntos* in Peru to date, drawing on documentary analysis and fieldwork in Ayacucho Department, the first region in which the pilot phase of the program was implemented. We selected two communities based on the following criteria: a) overlap with the

longitudinal international project, Young Lives, research sites and potential to follow up the impacts of social protection initiatives on children over time, b) geographical accessibility; and c) a significant proportion of the children from the community enrolled in the program. Based on this selection process, qualitative research involving key informant interviews and focus group discussions in the communities of Arizona and Rosapata was carried out in July/August 2006.<sup>8</sup> The analysis pays particular attention to the impacts of the program on childhood poverty, the strengths and weaknesses of a conditional approach, and changes in intra-household and community dynamics—both intended and unintended. It concludes by discussing future policy challenges and directions for future research.

## **2. Conceptualizing risk and vulnerability**

Central to the concept of social protection is a concern with reducing risk and vulnerability by enhancing poor people's capacities to avoid, cope with and/or recover from adverse shocks (e.g. Shepherd et al., 2004). Importantly, it recognizes poverty as a dynamic rather than static state and the fact that poverty may be temporary, transitory or chronic (e.g. Minujin et al., 2006). However, given the multi-dimensionality of factors that underpin poverty and deprivation, there is considerable debate among analysts about how vulnerability and risk should best be defined, ranging from a narrow economic/livelihoods approach through to a broad multi-faceted definition including equity, non-discrimination, empowerment and socio-cultural and political rights (e.g. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). In the case of children, the conceptual debate is even more challenging. Vulnerability may be used to refer to i) pre-defined particularly vulnerable children (e.g. orphans, street children, victims of trafficking), ii) children as a whole demographic group or iii) it may include multiple dimensions—some derived from broader community and household environmental, political and economic vulnerabilities and some aspects that are child-specific, including vulnerabilities related to education/ skills acquirement, health, socio-cultural norms and practices (e.g. discrimination against girls or disabled children) as well as particular policy decisions (e.g. institutionalization, user fees for basic services) (Marcus, 2006: 31).

With a focus on children in poor households and communities Juntos (“The National Program of Support to the Poorest”) is implicitly underpinned by a mixture of the second and third definitions of vulnerability, combining a concern with poor children in general as well as more disaggregated dimensions of household and child-specific vulnerabilities in the context of high levels of national inequality. Despite rapid national economic growth over the last 15 years (1993 to 1997 and 2001 to 2006), Peru is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America, the world's most unequal continent.<sup>9</sup> Stark inequalities are manifest not only in terms of income distribution<sup>10</sup> but also in terms of human development indicators and access to basic services (see Appendix 1). Children are particularly at risk with 2 out of every 3 children under 14 years in Peru living below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2004). Within this context, Juntos seeks to address the risks to poor children's future human capital development stemming from inadequate access to

quality basic services and social exclusion (linked to a lack of civic identity documentation which precludes their participation in social programmes).

The Juntos program also explicitly conceptualizes vulnerability in relation to Peru's recent history of political violence. It is seen as a way to tackle the particular vulnerabilities of populations who were most affected by the political violence prevalent in the country between 1980-2000. During this time, 69,280 Peruvians were killed, a figure greater than the combined deaths of Peruvians in all other external and civil wars that have occurred in the 182 years since national independence. Most of the victims were from poor rural communities, many were Quechua speakers and more than 40% were from the Ayacucho Department.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, when the program was launched in September 2005, the first community selected—Chuschi—was symbolic because this was the area where the terrorist organization, the Shining Path carried out its first act of terrorism in the 1980s.

### **3. Program coverage, targeting and financing**

Eligible households in the Juntos program receive a fixed monthly cash transfer of 100 soles (approximately 30USD) per month irrespective of household size<sup>12</sup> which is conditional on their compliance with accessing basic public services for their children. The program is targeted specifically to impoverished households who have children under 14 years (including widows/widowers, grandparents and guardians). The transfer is given to mothers on the assumption that they are likely to be more accountable for ensuring their children's well-being.<sup>13</sup> In return women sign an agreement with the state for a maximum of four years and agree to the following on penalty of three-months suspension of payment in the case of non-compliance:

- complete civic identification documents for themselves and their children<sup>14</sup>

- 85% school attendance for their children

- complete vaccination, health and pre and post-natal care checks

- take advantage of the National Nutritional Assistance Program package for children under three years of age, use chlorinated water and anti-parasite medication and

- attend capacity building/ awareness-raising programs on child rearing and avail their families of government provided services and social programs.

By September 2006, 135,000 households were receiving transfers but the new Alan Garcia administration is aiming to extend the program to cover 250,000 families by 2007. The Peruvian Prime Minister, Jorge Del Castillo recently announced that it would be allocating US\$124 million to "Juntos" in 2007, a US\$40 million increase over 2006. This would allow for the program to be scaled up to 378 districts in 13 regions, up from 110 districts in 4 regions in 2005.

### *Targeting mechanisms*

Targeting comprises three stages: geographic targeting, household targeting and a process of community validation of potential beneficiaries. In the first stage, four criteria are used to efficiently identify the poorest districts in the country: extreme income poverty, access to infrastructure and basic services (e.g. roads, electricity, water, sanitation), the level of chronic infant malnutrition and a history of political violence.<sup>15</sup> This data is compiled from the Ministry of Finance and Economics (MEF) and FONCODES poverty maps, the national census and the Report on the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation to identify the areas most affected by violence during the 1980s and 1990s.

The second stage, the household targeting, is based on a social demographic questionnaire designed and implemented by the National Statistics Office (INEI), combined with an algorithm to establish the cut-off point between the poor and non-poor (poverty line). This process has, however, generated some problems given the general level of poverty in areas where Juntos is being established. Because the algorithm does not adequately distinguish between qualifying and non-qualifying families (in some cases the difference is a mere fraction of a percent), it has resulted in problems of leakage (selecting families who should not qualify) as well as under-coverage of families in extreme poverty.

The final stage—community validation—involves bringing together the community and local authorities, along with representatives from the departments of health and education and the Roundtable Against Poverty. The aim is to identify whether the first two stages accurately reflect reality, for example, allowing for the exclusion of traders, non-community members and those with a certain level of personal property/goods on the one hand, or including impoverished families that were erroneously excluded on the other. This is very important as once the list of beneficiaries has been publicly displayed, it is almost impossible to reverse the decision.

The pressure to implement the program in the first communities selected generated a series of problems, in part because of the geographic isolation and dispersed population in the poorest rural areas. In some cases, the interviews were carried out in public places rather than people's homes or workplaces, resulting in a number of problems. In addition to confidentiality issues, some beneficiaries lacked the requisite information to fill out the INEI questionnaire and/ or were required to travel considerable distances and forgo agricultural or pastoral work. This, coupled with inaccurate recording of information by interviewers who lacked sufficient knowledge about local realities, meant that approximately 20% of those who completed the questionnaire should have been covered by the program but were not. Many of these initial problems, however, have since been addressed.

The validation assemblies—seen as one of Juntos' successes—have also presented problems. Although they have served to filter out approximately 10% of the households initially selected, who were somewhat better off due to the ownership of petty business or ownership of larger quantities of livestock, villagers are

often reluctant to speak out about who should be excluded from the program due to community power relations.

Education and health sector personnel have served as important allies to validate program beneficiaries, given their general familiarity with the living conditions of families in the area. But our interviews suggest that health professionals were often not invited to the validation assemblies and sometimes received insults and threats when they refused to fill out registration forms for families residing outside the community or passing off children from other families as their own. In such cases health professionals chose to stay away from the meetings to avoid confrontation with the population.

*It's a unique problem for us. We were noticing children from other communities and we wouldn't stamp their contract sheet; the mothers became very angry and, insulted us....But it is clear that a large number of women don't deserve to get the benefits.*(Obstetrician, Arizona health clinic).

### ***Financing***

In 2005 Law N° 28562 provided for 120 million soles to finance the pilot phase of the program, which covered 110 districts of Huancavelica, Ayacucho, Apurímac and Huánuco regions. In 2006 a total of 300 million soles for the expansion phase (including 210 new districts) was allocated to broaden coverage in the original four regions as well as five additional regions: Puno, Cajamarca, La Libertad, Junín and Ancash. This budget has been divided as follows: 60% is used to pay for the cash transfers, 30% to strengthen the supply of basic services<sup>16</sup>, especially to meet the new demand generated by participation in Juntos, and the remaining 10% is spent on operational costs, which is low compared to equivalent programs in Mexico and Chile<sup>17</sup>.

### **4. Implementation strengths and weaknesses**

The institutional design of Juntos has been carefully thought out to overcome a number of the key problems that plague the implementation of other social programs in Peru. These include problems of politicization, clientelism, corruption and leakage (e.g. Copestake, 2006), a lack of synergies across sectors and inadequate reach to the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of the population. Key characteristics of Juntos' institutional composition are i) a centralized directorate managed by one of the most powerful central government agencies, the Presidential Council of Ministers (PCM); ii) mechanisms to promote inter-sectoral coordination; iii) the creation of a rigorous data collection system to monitor compliance with the program conditionalities and iv) community-level program facilitators.

Whereas other social programs in Peru are under the relatively weak and poorly resourced Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES), Juntos was placed under the PCM in order to ensure efficient implementation and to promote an inter-sectoral approach to the implementation of program. It is managed by a directorate comprised of a president, four civil society representatives who are part of the

National Accord<sup>18</sup> and representatives of the Ministries of Education, Health, Women and Social Development, as well as Economy and Finance. The directorate approves the program's policies and intervention strategies and meets periodically to address priority themes, such as problems in meeting the demand for services generated by Juntos and attempts to politicize the program. There is a strong emphasis on consensus decision-making and transparency in order to establish the legitimacy of the program. At the local level the inter-sectoral focus is promoted through Multi-sectoral Technical Committees (MTCs) which are responsible for fostering linkages between the program, sectors and the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (RPR).

The administrative and implementation functions of the program—such as registering households<sup>19</sup>, certifying compliance with the program's conditions, and transfer of cash payments—are overseen by the executive director, supported by a technical committee and regional and district coordinators as well as program facilitators selected through a competitive public process overseen by the Roundtable for Poverty Reduction<sup>20</sup>.

Monitoring and evaluation of beneficiaries' compliance with the conditions attached to receipt of the cash transfers is a critical part of the implementation design. In order to facilitate this an information system has been designed whereby barcodes are used to permit direct access to data on each program beneficiary (mothers and children). Moreover, the system has the potential to synthesize information related to other social programs which currently lack an adequate registry of beneficiaries. The monitoring function of the program is overseen by the Committee on Supervision and Transparency (CST) which is comprised of members of the church and civil society, in close coordination with provincial and district RPRs.<sup>21</sup> To date this monitoring role has been undertaken in 20 communities. Although they still lack adequate funds to function properly, the committees have been effective in the early detection of diverse problems including deals between teachers and parents to cover up mutual absences from school, professionals charging beneficiaries for filling out program paperwork, the use of cash transfers to purchase alcohol, and mistreatment on the part of National Bank officials when disbursing payments.

In order to raise awareness about the program at the community level and to promote a smooth flow of information about the programs objectives, intervention strategies and efficacy, a system of community facilitators has been developed. These facilitators are part of the beneficiary population, elected by an assembly and are predominantly women<sup>22</sup>. Their role is to link families to public services, give public talks on the program and to verify the families' compliance with the program. However, although the facilitators are being supported by community health workers at present, because many of the women involved are illiterate<sup>23</sup> they often struggle to comprehend the key messages of the program and to convey these to the community, and some have resigned as a result.

*I don't understand why they started being facilitators. Many of them don't know how to write, which is a huge disadvantage because in order for them to pass on and teach what they know to the others, they*

*must have at least a minimal level of literacy. Maybe some of them have been put in this position against their will? (Nurse, Vinchos health clinic).*

## **5. Participants' perceptions**

*(What is your view on the program Juntos?) They give us 100 soles to eat*

*(And who provides the money) The government*

*(And what is the money used for?) To buy out clothes, food, so that we don't miss school and also to buy everything they ask us to buy for school. To go to school clean. And they we have to go to school without fail.*

*(Who told you this?) The teacher told us that we are poor and the money is being given to us so we don't miss school, if we do there will be a penalty, and they will stop giving us the money (Beneficiary children, Arizona).*

Due to rigorous efforts to avoid any politicization of the program combined with recognized success in reaching some of the poorest and most vulnerable populations<sup>24</sup>, Juntos' achievements since April 2005 appear relatively impressive. Although there was reportedly some initial skepticism<sup>25</sup>, program beneficiaries also seem to believe that Juntos is making a positive difference in their lives. For example, in the face of silence by presidential candidates about whether they would continue the program, women beneficiaries from Ayacucho organized a march in defence of the program and sent a petition signed by the region's president and district majors in their support.<sup>26</sup> This view was endorsed by our interviews:

*I am really very happy because I am very poor. I have never had so much money, ever. This money helps me a great deal....I can use the money to buy things for my children, their clothes, school uniform (Women focus group, Rosapata).*

*I say that this government must certainly love its population, the poor, to send us this money, because we have a lot of children (Women focus group, Rosapata).*

Respondents commented that the program is trying to counter extreme poverty for rural families, as God's grace to the poor, or as an attempt to reduce inequalities in living conditions and to provide the poor with better opportunities, especially education, to overcome their poverty.

*"...I think they have realized that here we have nothing, and only in other countries are the children well-educated, study and become professional. Given that we rural folk lack professionals of our own, even doctors, surely this program will help some to emerge from our community (Women beneficiaries focus group, Rosapata)*

The following section first discusses changes in children's educational attendance and time use, health and nutrition seeking behavior of mothers and children, and birth registration rates. It will then turn to a discussion of changes in family dynamics and livelihood opportunities resulting from participation in the program.

### *Children's time use*

Our interviews with program beneficiaries as well as program implementers and local authorities suggest that school attendance in communities where Juntos has been implemented has increased significantly. Moreover, although there was no reported increase in school enrolment in Rosapata between 2005 to 2006, there was a 20% increase in Arizona<sup>27</sup>. As a result, children's time use has changed. Previously children's involvement in agricultural work and domestic chores resulted in frequent school absenteeism but this has been curbed considerably due to the new requirement to be punctual and attend school regularly for school. Although children still carry out work activities to support their families after school, on weekends and in vacations, our research suggested that much of this work has now been absorbed by women, thereby increasing their workload.

*Before Juntos, we were not afraid to make our children miss school and instead have them work on the land, transport the produce, and to take care of the animals. The older children would have to work to have money to buy their school supplies (Women Recipients Focus Group, Arizona)*

Juntos has also resulted in greater parental involvement in children's education, as there is a growing awareness about the importance of education and the need to support children's learning process at home.

*Previously, we didn't take very good care of our children... Now we worry about how our children are doing in school, if they're improving their grades and we go to the school and ask. Before, our children were left to themselves, once they were registered in school, we would forget about them and only ask for their grades at the end of the year. Sometimes they failed and we thought the teacher had probably just not taught them well. Now, we parents support our kids and this is why they are moving ahead. (Women Focus Group, Arizona)*

Interviewees emphasized that fathers in particular were becoming more involved than previously in their children's education, in part because of greater financial security and less pressure to work as daily laborers or to migrate outside the community for work.

*I used to have to leave to find work in other places like Ayacucho, and so, I was rarely home. I would be in the jungle or in the fields...but now, I rarely have to do that since the money we are getting is helpful (Male beneficiary).*

The need for teachers and school principals to rigorously monitor school attendance due to the new Juntos compliance criteria, has in turn indirectly exerted pressure to reduce teacher absenteeism, a major problem in rural schools that clearly compromised education quality.

*In previous years, sometimes there were no teachers as the Ministry of Education would not send any. Now, since Juntos, there has been an increase in the number of teachers. Moreover, although there used to be three or four in every community, only a couple would actually work but now they all go to work. (Male focus group, Arizona).*

### ***Accessing healthcare***

There has been an impressive increase in health-seeking behavior since Juntos was initiated. This is reflected in the 30% increase in children under 1 year receiving vaccinations in 2006 as compared with 2005, and the 200% increase in health clinic visits for children under 5 years and much higher rate of children aged 5-14 years visiting health clinics for check-ups rather than only in the case of illness. Pre- and post-natal visits have increased by 65% and there has been a reported reduction in home births, which is seen as a priority given the very high levels of maternal mortality in the area.

More generally, the introduction of Juntos is viewed by health professionals as a positive step as it is helping to overcome the resistance of poor and vulnerable populations in accessing services, and also guaranteeing good attendance at capacity building sessions. As one obstetrician explained,

*The majority of people are illiterate here and reluctant to listen to suggestions. They don't value their own health or the health of their children. For instance, we've previously had problems convincing pregnant women to give birth in a health center; the people were too scared to go. After Juntos they agreed more readily as they are getting a benefit in return (Obstetrician, Arizona).*

Overcoming the alarming rate of malnutrition in the area (60% in Vinchos) is another priority of the health sector. As a result of insistence by program and health professionals that the Juntos cash transfer should be used to address child malnutrition, families are reporting purchasing more high protein foods (e.g. cheese and meat) and fruit. For example: *...they tell us to eat well and that our mothers have to buy food with that money, they tell us not to let them spend the money on liquor or coca but only on food (Children, Arizona).*

### ***Intra-household dynamics***

Juntos has brought about some important changes in family dynamics, both intended and unintended effects. First, the program's monthly cash transfer of 100 soles has helped to improve participating household livelihood security to a degree. For example, some households are using part of the cash to not only improve their living conditions (e.g. buying materials for house repairs or to construct latrines) but also purchasing animals to increase their food self-sufficiency and also to sell meat and dairy products.

*Some of us didn't have homes. The money is helpful for everything, we are buying building materials and now we are improving our houses... Buying animals is like saving money in a bank account; we buy piglets and when they grow, we have some capital for the future.(Focus group with women, Arizona).*

However, our research also highlighted that the size of the cash transfer has its definite limitations. This is especially the case for families with multiple children, and in the context of new expenses, such as increased

demands from teachers to purchase school-related items and the need to cover transport costs to the district towns to receive the Juntos payment from designated banks.

*...it's just a small help, one hundred soles is too little, especially when there are several children. For example, we buy fruit for our children, and when we go to Ayacucho, we have to spend money on transportation and food, so we end up with even less money (Woman beneficiary, Arizona). The teachers didn't ask for as much money previously. Now they tell us that since we are getting money from Juntos so we should support our children...the teachers ask for money for exams, for chalk, for whatever is needed. We are also asked by school authorities to cover the schools' needs (Focus group with women beneficiaries, Arizona).*

A second important impact on intra-household dynamics has involved attempts to realign gender relations and the gendered division of labour within the family. More specifically, Juntos has sought to improve women's bargaining power within the household by reducing their economic dependence and providing them with an independent financial resource on the one hand, and promoting greater involvement of men in domestic activities and childcare, especially when women are occupied with the demands of the program. It is interesting to note that there appears to be a general consensus in the communities where we undertook our study regarding the appropriateness of giving the cash transfer to women due to their greater level of responsibility and appreciation of children's needs. By contrast men were perceived to often consume high levels of alcohol and be uninvolved in children's upbringing

*Sometimes men are very irresponsible, they spend money on drinking. Women see their children's needs, they ask us for school supplies and their teachers ask for fees to cover various school activities. Women know about these worries whereas men don't think about these things and sometimes, they don't even give us money (Juntos facilitator, Arizona).*

*We are happy. Before, we were always waiting for our husbands to bring money, but now we have our own money. We can give the money to our children and sometimes, since the money is ours, we buy something for ourselves with it (Focus group with women beneficiaries, Arizona).*

In general, respondents emphasized that men were now participating in activities previously seen as exclusively female (e.g. cooking, cleaning and washing). This is in part because women are unable to complete all domestic responsibilities due to the need to comply with program conditions such as traveling to the bank to receive the transfers<sup>28</sup>, and attending regular capacity building/ awareness raising workshops and partly due to an explicit emphasis by local program implementers that ensuring children's health, nutrition and educational development is the responsibility of both parents.

*When she leaves, I have to take care of the kids...Previously, I didn't believe in doing women's work. Before, I would come home and grumble when dinner wasn't ready, I would tell her "what do you do all day, you should at least have a meal ready for when I get home". Now I don't say that to her since I've experienced her responsibilities; I cook, wash the dishes, do the children's laundry, wash*

*them, clean the house and when she suddenly gets home, the food is not ready yet (laughter)*

(Interview with a male beneficiary, Arizona).

Our interviews also reported a reduction in domestic violence, related in part to less daily survival pressures and the greater negotiation capacity and economic autonomy of women, but also due to a broader campaign to reduce family violence in the region. These changes were not uniform, however, and in some cases men's support actually decreased and they used the cash to purchase alcohol and coca.

### ***Effects on community dynamics***

Juntos' targeting process has had an impact on community dynamics. In a context of general poverty, when some families are included and others not, and there is insufficient clarity about the reasons for this, it generates feelings of sadness, resentment and anger. As discussed above, especially in the initial stages, the program has suffered from a number of weaknesses in identifying beneficiaries: both the inclusion of families with resources and leaving out those living in extreme poverty. The testimonies show that especially vulnerable women, such as single mothers and widows, are often excluded because eligibility is based on aggregate household poverty status, rather than considering the possibility of compound families such as single mothers living with relatives.

The most visible effects on community dynamics are that the program is resulting in marked differences between children and mothers who are program beneficiaries and those who are not. Families who do not receive the cash transfer have less opportunity to purchase uniforms and shoes, or give children pocket money to make small purchases at the kiosk, generating a sense of exclusion among children. This becomes especially problematic when it involves families who should not have been excluded due to their poverty level. Some interviewees also mentioned that some children do not want to assume responsibilities at school as they consider that these should be done by the beneficiaries or "workers of Juntos" as "they are being paid".

*Sometimes, the boys who are not in Juntos, complain to the teachers, saying, "we are not in Juntos, let them do it" (the other students). Sometimes these students are asked to do chores, like clean something and they just rebel. The teachers have complained about this, they explain that these boys get offended when they see the other Juntos kids eating well, eating fruits, and buying things ( non-beneficiary, Arizona).*

*The ones in Juntos have new clothes. The ones who are not part of Juntos, like us, go to school with torn clothes and no shoes. We don't have money to buy things like that and it makes us upset... we see that they go to a store and buy cookies, eat fruit. Sometimes we ask our mom for money, but she doesn't have any (Non-beneficiary girl, Arizona).*

This impact is also felt among women who participate in community activities, meetings organized by the health sector or mothers clubs, or paying joint fees for communal water.

*“...the community is divided since, only some families are in Juntos, this means that when there are activities, some people participate and others don’t...It causes problems, with the result is that communities are weakened from the lack of strong social participation (Regional health officer, Ayacucho).*

If this situation is not addressed, there is a risk that it will harm the social fabric of the community. This is of particular concern given that the areas where Juntos is being targeted have a long history of political violence and community tensions.

*...being included or not included can generate conflicts in some places, more than in others...Puno<sup>29</sup>, for example, is a complicated zone, conflictual...I don’t know if the program is taking this sufficiently into account (Roundtable for Poverty Reduction).*

However, in some cases the program has also generated an attitude of solidarity among the beneficiaries, who seek to share with those who do not receive the cash transfer but are obviously impoverished. *That is why during the assembly, the authorities, told us to choose the poorest people who are still not part of the program and everyone agreed (Beneficiary couple, Arizona).*

## **6. Linkages to broader social policies**

*Juntos’* emphasis on an inter-sectoral approach to tackle childhood poverty and the inter-generational transfer of poverty is without doubt a very important one. A growing body of evidence suggests that childhood poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is better addressed by an integrated social policy model (e.g. CHIP 2004; Lyytikainen et al., 2005). Due to *Juntos’* clear criteria for eligibility and exit, management by a single agency, and a rigorous data collection system, it would appear that *Juntos* is going to be well-placed to serve as an umbrella framework to coordinate synergies across child-related sectors.<sup>30</sup> The following section discusses the strengths and weaknesses of *Juntos’* inter-sectoral efforts to date, especially the need for *Juntos* to be implemented in tandem with initiatives to improve service quality and coverage, as well as the impacts of the program on community dynamics.

### ***Service access***

One of the strengths of the *Juntos* program is that it highlights the lack of investment in services in the poorest areas of the country. In the case of the health sector, given that there is no universal health coverage in the country, Ministry of Health (MINSA) documents recognize that the program offers opportunities for the sector to create synergies with its own objectives, especially in terms of health service coverage for geographically disperse populations. However, one of the weaknesses identified by our interviews at the regional level is that *Juntos* conditions do not give sufficient priority to the acquisition and application of practical health knowledge (e.g. constructing better kitchens, latrines, safe water supplies). More importantly, there was a general recognition that the sector was not prepared to cope with the increased demand and that this was compromising the quality of services under offer.

*...this has generated more demand in the health sector, but our health services were not strong enough. We didn't have the necessary resources, either the materials or the man power to respond to the demand and to the commitments that had been undertaken, many of our establishments have collapsed (Regional Health Director, Ayacucho).*

Health workers noted that the program had meant a higher workload for them and increased paper work, but had not translated into any improvement in quality, generating dissatisfaction among health personnel.

*... more people are being seen now, but sometimes the quality of the attention is poor. This is due to the lack of space, the lack of medicines and the need for more doctors. These changes are out of our reach; the fact that the program has been established, signifies an improvement for education, more children are going to school, but what about these other institutions? They are not getting better and we will not be able to fulfill our responsibilities to children. (Obstetrician, Arizona).*

In the case of the education sector, the Ministry of Education has a central team integrated within the Juntos structure, four regional coordinators and a network of pedagogical monitors who are in charge of a monitoring system for school attendance. The focus is on improving education quality in order to break intergenerational transfers of poverty, and several mechanisms have been introduced. First, the increased monitoring of rural school attendance (students directly and teachers indirectly) that Juntos has introduced is seen as positive and a first step in addressing major problems of educational under-achievement.

*Before, the education statistics could not to be trusted...since there were many teachers and students missing school, some lied because they had no supervision. Now that there is a monitoring system in place, the figures and data are more real.(Representative from the Regional Directorate for Education, Ayacucho).*

Second, capacity building initiatives to promote bilingual/intercultural education and curricula appropriate to single-teacher schools and multi-grade classes which are the majority in rural zones have also been introduced. However, greater coverage is producing problems in terms of capacity to respond to new demand generated by the program.

*School attendance has increased, there is a greater demand for education. Even in the first grade, there are about 40 to 48 kids in the class,...I went there one day---and I found the children all squeezed in, with 5 or 6 per desk, and why? Because they had to go to school...the problem is that there are not enough teachers (Obstetrician, Arizona).*

There are also linkages to several nutritional and educational programs under the Ministry of Women and Social Development. The nutritional program includes utilizing regional facilitators to implement a campaign targeting families enrolled in Juntos. The problem, however, is that there is poor coordination between facilitators employed by Juntos, the education and health sectors. Because of a rather narrow focus on poverty as income poverty and the denial of children's access to education health and nutrition services,

there are also no links to public programs dealing with child protection, especially the Legal Protection Offices for Women and Children (DEMUNAS). DEMUNAS are mandated to deal with cases of child abuse and violence and enforcement of child support payments (typically from absentee fathers). Given the high rates of child abuse and neglect in Peru, creating stronger linkages between the education and health sectors could help to strengthen the referral system to DEMUNAS and also to tackle some key barriers to child development. For example, non-enforcement of child support payments can hinder children's uptake of social services or in the case of violence against children contribute to for instance school absenteeism and education under-performance.

Program documents also discuss the importance of Juntos linking with livelihoods and income generation initiatives to holistically tackle poverty and vulnerability. The aim is to initiate links with other rural development and export programs (where there are good market linkages) so as to promote better economic opportunities for the poorest and most marginalized sectors of the population (employment, access to credit, technical assistance etc.). However, as yet few concrete strategies—apart from assistance in purchasing additional livestock—have emerged.

Similar concerns were raised about the limitations to date of the functioning of the technical multi-sectoral committees. While they have effectively served to exchange information, including about reported difficulties by program implementers (e.g. hiding school absence on the part of teachers, mass attendance at health facilities due to inadequate planning), there has been a relative lack of concrete aims and objectives to ensure the focus of Juntos is geographical rather than sectoral.

### ***Information systems***

Juntos is making important advances in developing an information system about families and children living in poverty. It is generating high quality data (through the *Código Único de Identidad* and the social demographic questionnaire on living conditions and access to services), which can be used by other social programs to avoid overlap/duplication. A committee has been set up especially to identify state investment in zones where Juntos has been initiated. However, there are still urgent information gaps including the lack of a national database on the real number of children per age group (necessary to overcome problems of exclusion) and inconsistencies between the databases of the Ministry of Health, Juntos and the National Program of Nutritional Assistance (PRONAA). In addition, in the case of monitoring and evaluation, a baseline is needed in order to evaluate the impacts of the program. However, this has not yet been defined, thus delaying any formal evaluation process.

There is also a widespread view that linkages between local authorities and the program need to be strengthened. Two particular concerns were raised. Our interviews suggested that there was a general consensus that there are insufficient mechanisms to denounce or claim redress in localities and districts where the program functions. In particular, some cases suggested the need for the program to have some

capacity for flexibility to take into account the particular vulnerability of single-headed households and circumstances of exceptional need (e.g. relating to family illness, sudden loss of employment).

Some informants also saw the policy of silence regarding the national (April 2005) and regional/municipal (Nov 2006) elections as problematic. The decision was taken not to provide detailed information about program impacts to external agents and the media in order to avoid attempts at political manipulation, distortion or critiques that could possibly damage the program's image. However, this meant that there was no space for public debate and undermined the information needs of diverse societal actors. It also resulted in marginalizing local authorities from the program and did not allow opportunities for capacity building, an important concern in the context of Peru's current decentralization process.

### ***Changing relationship between social programs and citizenry***

One of the longer-term aims of Juntos is to change the paternalistic relationship between the citizenry and state-funded social programs, and to present accessing basic services for children as a joint responsibility of both parents and the state. Core to this is the idea that in order to ensure that service providers are held accountable for the provision of quality services, citizens have to demonstrate their demand for access to quality services. In order to do this, there is a need to reconceptualize the way the population views government services from that of largesse to fulfilling its responsibility to meet citizen's economic and social rights. As one of our interviewees noted:

*Juntos is innovative because it interlinks your interests with those of the state: the state is interested in raising the education level of the population and you are interested in rising out of poverty, but it won't be free. The state will give you 100 soles and you will do what you have not always wanted to do, including sending your children—especially girls-- to school, as boys and girls have the same rights to an education. (Andrés Solari, staff member of a local NGO, Agenda Sur)*

Our interviews suggested that while some respondents were using the language of rights, this was far from widespread. Many of the women in particular knew about the demands of the program they had to meet but couched this in terms of tasks to be completed due to instructions from authorities rather than about a balance between citizenship rights and responsibilities.

*To keep the house clean, the children also have to be clean, they need to bathe and not run around dirty on the streets as before...They also say that we have to cook better.... But the most important thing is to educate our children, for them not to miss school, to send them clean and to take them to the health clinic (Women focus group, Rosaspata).*

However, some male interviewees talked about the notion of reparation to compensate the poorest population for their unequal standard of living and for having been the victims of political violence.

*...surely they have seen we are poor, the people in the fields are poor, and nor is it the money of the government, it's returning our money that we have given, because when we buy things, we are paying taxes, so for me I don't see it as a present (Focus group with male beneficiaries, Arizona).*

*...previously there was no support, at a minimum so children could study, orphans, but now these children who were orphaned as a result of the Shining Path violence, it is important that they can get an education (Community president, Rosaspata).*

It is interesting to note that beneficiaries and service providers alike believe it is necessary to apply pressure to ensure compliance with the conditions. However, although this strategy seems to be effective, there is a risk of infantilizing participants if the discourses used to inform them about the conditions focus on compliance rather than about balancing rights and responsibilities. Some respondents suggested that discursive practices in our study communities erred towards the former, and promoted a submissive attitude which is unlikely to be sustainable over time.

*I'm not aware that the families are opposed, it's more a case of submission. Although it sometimes seems to treat them like children, the advantage is the system is producing results...I believe the task is twofold and involves talking to them about their rights...your sons and daughters have the right to be educated... (Andres Solaria, Agenda Sur).*

This is particularly the case with hygiene which is one of the key points of traditional discrimination between urban and rural populations. While the insistence of program authorities that beneficiaries improve their personal appearance, children's hygiene and domestic living conditions no doubt has a positive effect, it also results in the internalization of discourses that they were previously "dirty" and "idle".

*This is changing, now we are no longer idle, we clean the house, before we were dirty...now we see that other women are cleaning and so we are ashamed to go around dirty... following the lectures we changed (Focus group with beneficiary women, Rosaspata).*

It is also worth noting that although many women appreciate the capacity building opportunities that Juntos provides to become more "advanced/developed", some are already complaining about how time-consuming their involvement in the program is. This raises concerns about whether the demands are realistic and not overly burdening women through a steep increase in unpaid work.

*We see them buying things, food that makes us envious, fruit, meat, clothes, but others say that every moment they are called to meetings, they get behind with their work and want to leave the program (Non-beneficiary woman, Arizona).*

## **7. Conclusions and policy challenges**

Broadly speaking, Peru's new conditional cash transfer program, Juntos, is recognized as having been effective in its first year of operation, enjoying support from the international community as well as public and private institutions involved in its implementation. It is reaching populations with the highest poverty

rates in the country, and has consistently avoided politicization, despite a difficult political transition in Peru's fledgling democratic history. These successes, notwithstanding, our research identified a number of implementation weaknesses and policy challenges that need to be debated by policy actors and urgently addressed as plans to scale up the program to other regions are set in motion.

### ***Targeting, social exclusion and poverty dynamics***

1. Although considerable efforts have been made in terms of targeting, including the innovative inclusion of communities most affected by prior political violence, some weaknesses in the household targeting approach and community validation process are generating adverse effects on community dynamics. Marked differences are emerging between participants and non-participants, both among adults and children. It will therefore be important to monitor to what extent this divide spills-over to other aspects of community participation, given that our research had already identified an emerging unwillingness among non-participants to carry out voluntary work within school and community groups.

2. While one possibility to combating this challenge could be to set a higher threshold for excluding participants, this will depend on financing from both domestic revenue and donors and the sustainability of these sources over time. At a minimum, it will also be necessary to establish information and complaint channels to allow the population to register their concerns. Such a process should consider mechanisms for re-evaluating excluded families, including those with specific needs, such as single mothers living in extended family arrangements, and also those that fall into poverty but were originally screened out. In this regard, it will be important to get local authorities, health service personnel and teachers—all of whom are likely to have a deep knowledge of local realities—involved in a more effective way.

### ***Strengthening a rights-based approach***

3. The program promotes joint responsibility between citizens and the state, with an emphasis on a balance between civic rights and duties. In practice, however, the relationship established through the conditionality agreement is somewhat paternalistic, with a risk of infantilizing rural women in particular. A key challenge therefore is to address the disjuncture between national level policy documents and discourses and the way the programme is implemented by front-line staff at the local level. If a culture of citizenship, rights and state accountability is going to be fostered, then it will be important to monitor the extent to which programme officials are imposing their own conceptions and conditions of “good parenting” and “house-keeping”.

4. Although reducing gender inequalities was not a specific goal of the program, interestingly there have been some positive spillover impacts of women's greater empowerment within the household stemming from greater financial independence. Not only are some husbands sharing more of the domestic and caring work out of an awareness that complying with the conditionalities will necessitate a joined effort, but a number of women reported a reduction in family violence. It will thus be valuable to monitor these

tendencies in order to better understand the underlying dynamics and better reinforce positive changes. Moreover, research is needed to understand to what extent women's increased visibility and decision-making power is camouflaging a greater work burden.

### *Strengthening inter-sectoral linkages*

5. Juntos' inter-sectoral approach represents an important strength of the program vis-à-vis other social programs. However, while this approach has allowed for an important degree of information sharing and problem identification to date, an effective articulation of actions transcending sectoral logic has not yet been achieved. One priority challenge is to develop a unified efficient information system to overcome problems of duplication and exclusion in social programs. Equally important, will be the development of a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system that will help to consolidate learning from the program and to ensure that these lessons are embedded into the design of the program as it is scaled up to other areas.

6. Despite improvements in maternal and child health and increased primary school attendance, service quality improvements have not kept pace of increased demand. The issue of service quality should be tackled as a priority in order to guarantee effective improvements in human capital and avoiding a situation whereby people are compelled through conditionality to use public services that are of little value. Because of over-extension of existing services, an immediate priority will be to ensure adequate financing of these pro-poor sectors to expand coverage in line with demand. In this regard, existing civil society child-sensitive budget analysis and monitoring initiatives should be expanded to focus specifically on this issue, not only at the national level but also at sub-national levels.

7. Child protection from violence and abuse is missing from Juntos' inter-sectoral approach. However, fostering linkages to children's legal protection offices (DEMUNAS) found throughout the country could foster a more joined-up approach to tackling this serious social issue.

8. Finally, the program's intention of promoting income-generation strategies is an important one if sustainable poverty reduction is to be achieved but much work still has to be done to translate this goal into concrete strategies oriented towards improving productive infrastructure and facilitating access to credit and technical assistance.

## Appendix 1:

### **Socio-demographic characteristics of study sites**

Ayacucho Department has 619,338 inhabitants (cf. national population of 28 million), 43% of whom are under 18 years. The department is ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 24 departments in terms of poverty and human development indicators (UNDP, 2005).

Maternal and infant mortality: Indicators of maternal and infant health reflect grave disparities which are hidden by national averages. The maternal mortality rate in Ayacucho is 304.7 per 100,000, almost double the national average (163.9) (MINSA, 2001), with only 41.5% of pregnant mothers receiving the nationally recommended minimum of four prenatal check-ups. The infant mortality rate is 50 per 1000 live births and the rate of mortality for children under 5 years, 68 per 1000, in both cases higher than the national average (43 and 60 respectively) (UNICEF 2004).

Child malnutrition: Malnutrition indices are also alarming: one in three children under 5 years in the region suffers from chronic malnutrition (UNICEF 2004), which limits not only their survival prospects but also longer-term physical and cognitive development.

Primary education: The main problem is quality, as access is close to universal (93% in Ayacucho, compared to 96% at the national level) (MINEDU, 2004). Problems are predominantly related to multi-grade and single teacher schools, and a lack of appropriate curricula for such schools. This contributes to high levels of grade repetition and dropouts in areas of high levels of poverty. As UNICEF (2004) argues  $\frac{3}{4}$  of students in areas of poverty are over-age (50% in urban, 60% in rural areas). In our study communities, 14% of children dropped out and 12% repeated in Rosapata, and 10% and 19% respectively in Arizona.

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<sup>2</sup> UNDP, 2006; Barrientos et al., 2006; Marcus, 2006; Minujin et al., 2006

<sup>3</sup> See Moser, 2003 ; Britto, 2005 ; Copestake, 2006; Lindert et al., 2006; Molyneux, 2006; Handa and Davis, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Juntos was developed in line with the National Social Policy Development Plan and the National Plan to Overcome Poverty (2004-6) which have three objectives: developing human capital, respecting human rights, and providing economic opportunities and social protection for the most vulnerable sectors.

<sup>5</sup> Poverty is concentrated predominantly in rural areas. This situation is reflected in social indicators such as child mortality, which affects 24 in every thousand live births in urban areas but 45 per thousand children in rural areas; it is also reflected in the nutritional levels of children under the age of 5: while 63.4% of children in urban areas show an acceptable nutrition level, only 30% of rural children are adequately nourished. (UNICEF, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> The 2002 National Accord represents Peru's response to the Millennium Declaration, which involves participation from political, religious, civil society and government organizations aimed at improving equity and social justice.

<sup>7</sup> The Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was created during the transitional government, with the objective of reaching an agreement on social policies, achieving better implementation of poverty reduction programmes and institutionalizing civic participation in the design, decision making and budget prioritization of the State's social policy. It brings together government, civil society, the business sector, NGOs and international donor agencies.

<sup>8</sup> More than 50% of children under 14 years are enrolled in the program in these two communities.

<sup>9</sup> The richest tenth of the population in the region, receives almost 50% of total income, while the poorest tenth only gets 1.6% (World Bank, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Peru's gini co-efficient was 0.56 in 2002 (UNDP, 2006). Despite being a 'middle income country', half of Peruvians live below the USD 2 poverty line and one fifth below the USD 1 poverty line (DFID, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> For more details see the 2003 report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>12</sup> In Ayacucho the average fertility rate was 4.2 children in 2000 (INEI, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> This follows Mexico's Progres/Oportunidades' successful approach of directing cash transfers through mothers, not only because women are seen to be more aware of and take primary responsibility for children's care but also in order to provide women with greater intra-household bargaining and decision-making power. The extent to which this leads

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to a transformation of gender relations in the family or merely exacerbates women's work burden is however increasingly debated (e.g. Molyneux, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Having a National Identity document was made a prerequisite of participation in Juntos, in line with the Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES)'s My Name Program, which was established in order to help combat the widespread lack of such documentation, among rural populations and areas affected by the internal armed conflict. Although difficult to estimate the exact magnitude of this problem, available data shows that there are approximately one million people without an I.D, while 15% of girls and boys born in Peru every year lack a birth certificate, putting them at a disadvantage in terms of access to public services and social programmes to which they are eligible as Peruvian citizens (see [www.demus.org.pe](http://www.demus.org.pe)). To date, 15000 cases of mothers and children who lacked civic documentation have been identified as a result of Juntos' registration process, and 85% of such cases have been resolved by providing these services free of charge.

<sup>15</sup> In the twenty years of political violence in Peru (1980-2000), 69,280 Peruvians were killed, many of whom were Quechua speakers, poor and rural. Of the total, 12.5% were children.

<sup>16</sup> An evaluation of health sector services estimated that 105 million soles would be needed to cover this gap. However, in reality the budget transferred in 2005 was just 16 million soles (12 million assigned to health and an additional 4 million from MIMDES) for the 100 districts participating in the pilot phase. In 2006 this amount increased in line with more districts involved to 30 million soles (320 districts). The budget allocated to the education sector in 2005 increased to almost 13 million soles. Priority areas identified included contracting new teachers, strengthening monitoring systems for rural schools, and increasing investment in infrastructure.

<sup>17</sup> This figure is considerably lower than for similar programs: Mexico's Oportunidades Program and Chile's Solidario Program allocated 57% and 41% respectively, to administrative and operational expenses.

<sup>18</sup> National Confederation of Private Business Institutions, Peruvian Workers General Confederation, National Association of Research Centers, Development and Social Promotion, Social Development National Conference and Caritas Peru.

<sup>19</sup> For each type of conditionality there is specific paperwork for families to fill out. This data is then compiled centrally and is used to verify program compliance and determine payment or suspension of the cash transfer.

<sup>20</sup> The profile of these facilitators is based on residence in the area where Juntos is being implemented, fluency in Quechua language, and at least three years fieldwork experience. Generally these facilitators are health professionals, teachers, agronomists etc.

<sup>21</sup> The committee's role is viewed as transitory and should eventually be assumed by local RTRs and the Defensoria del Pueblo, with the aim of strengthening local capacities in line with the ongoing decentralization process.

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that in the case of community health facilitators, many are men who enjoy higher education levels and greater mobility in geographically disperse areas (due to safety issues). In the case of *Juntos*, the facilitators are predominantly women (98 of 107 in Vinchos).

<sup>23</sup> UNDP data from 2005 shows that 28.2% of Ayacucho's population is illiterate (World Development Report 2005), 29% of women and 9.5% of men.

<sup>24</sup> Juntos has received international support from UNDP and FAO, and has signed cooperative agreements with Programa Oportunidades in Mexico and the strategy Hambre Cero (Zero Hunger) in Brazil.

<sup>25</sup> Many women initially distrusted the intentions of the government as it differed markedly from the traditional distribution of food typical of Peruvian social programs, habitually subject to clientelism and political manipulation.

<sup>26</sup> Continuity of the program was eventually ratified by Alan Garcia's government in July 2006. Although some program adjustments were announced, there was to be no substantive change to the program's design.

<sup>27</sup> Due to the absence of a baseline, information records are being developed at a regional level, along with a series of indicators that will allow an evaluation of the changes that have been generated since the start of the program.

<sup>28</sup> Initially, women took their children when they went to claim the cash transfer, making them miss school but now the program demands that the women go alone, or only take their unweaned babies, to reduce school absenteeism.

<sup>29</sup> Puno, is another very poor region in the southern highlands where the program is about to start

<sup>30</sup> The executive director of Juntos is cognizant, however, that the program first needs to be well established before it can take on this type of umbrella function.