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NGO–government partnerships for scaling up: sexuality education in Mexico

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Governments in developing countries need effective programmes to advance public policies and improve social welfare. NGOs often have well-tested programmes and research outcomes that are relevant to such needs, yet the scaling up of pilot programmes to national level is difficult to achieve and frequently unsuccessful. This article presents a case of successful scaling up for an adolescent sexual-health and psychosocial-competencies programme in Mexico, through an NGO–government partnership involving IMIFAP, a Mexican NGO. The case illustrates how an NGO can create a successful partnership with government to scale up effective programmes, in ways that meet key needs of the target population while protecting the NGO's core values.

Introduction

One of the most sobering realities affecting public administration today is the difficulty in translating innovative policy ideas into effective public action. Achieving broad national coverage in social development remains beyond the capabilities and interests of governments acting alone. Particularly in low-income countries, where administrative capacity is often weak, many factors limit the ability of governments to address socio-economic problems. These factors include poor resource environments, budgetary cutbacks, and politically driven changes in state activity and services.

A gap thus frequently arises between the goals of a government and the implementation of programme activities based on public policies. Governments have the potential to make sustained impacts on development issues such as poverty and illiteracy through innovative public policies, but often policies remain at the 'what to do' level without addressing the 'how to do it' questions. One way for governments to bridge the gap is to use programmes that have proved effective in small-scale settings, preferably with evidence from randomised controlled trials. When such programmes are developed and tested by NGOs, and sufficient political commitment exists among all parties, it is possible to build an effective public–private

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partnership. This kind of collaboration is possible only when the public entity and private organisation have common objectives regarding the extension of social welfare and are willing to share the work and the benefits derived from collaboration (Reich 2002).

NGOs often work in areas outside the main interest of governments and have been wary of collaborating with them. At the same time, NGOs have increasingly demonstrated a capacity to produce successful development programmes. The period from the mid-1970s witnessed a proliferation of NGOs in social development and health services. Organisationally, the small size and flexible structures of many NGOs have allowed them to formulate, implement, and evaluate innovative programmes directed at the needs of specific groups of individuals and communities, as well as national and international populations (Giddens 1998). NGOs have also shown a capacity to work on topics considered too controversial by government agencies—for example, sexuality.

A major limitation of such programmes is that NGOs may either not be interested in scaling up their social development activities or are unable to mobilise the resources needed to expand local pilot projects to national-level programmes. These factors restrict the potential impacts of NGOs' programmes and inhibit their capacity to conduct large-scale efforts. In the absence of effective scaling up, NGO development successes may benefit local communities but remain islands of excellence within wider economic and institutional environments.

The local successes of NGOs, however, can create opportunities for broader social impact through collaboration with official agencies. There can be mutual interests in such collaboration. NGOs can work with governments in scaling up their locally successful programmes to the regional or national levels, and governments can benefit from the experiences of NGOs in developing more effective social development programmes (Jordan and van Tuijl 1998).

Despite this potential for complementarity, it is not easy to develop partnerships between NGOs and governments, especially in developing countries. In many countries, NGOs and governments remain separate entities, often caught in conflictual relationships, so that they avoid opportunities for interaction. In some environments, NGO partnerships with government have become mechanisms for creating new forms of corruption associated with development assistance (Smith 2007: 102). These problems make it difficult to create effective partnerships that can scale up successful NGO programmes.

This article[1] examines four dimensions of scaling up in the context of an NGO–government partnership seeking to expand the implementation of a programme that works well with a small population. Any NGO–government partnership aimed at scaling up must address these four challenges, identified by Peter Uvin and David Miller in their 1995 study:

1. extending the target populations or geographical areas within a country or across national boundaries (*quantitative scaling up* of outputs);
2. extending the contents of a programme, including the number or type of educational and/or promotional materials of a programme (*functional scaling up* of inputs);
3. transforming and growing the organisation so that it can operate at a higher degree of complexity and capacity, including the management of several different programmes (*organisational scaling up* of processes); and
4. extending a programme so that it becomes regional or national policy (*political scaling up*).

During the 1990s the world witnessed growing enthusiasm for the use of public–private partnerships to improve health and welfare conditions, in both industrialised and developing countries. Yet few scientific evaluations have been conducted of these partnerships at the global, national, or local levels, and few systematic assessments exist of the processes used to establish and implement these new approaches (Barr 2007). In developing countries, the introduction of public–private partnerships (PPPs) has generated intense debate, especially

when the new arrangements are perceived as substituting private for-profit entities for public-sector responsibilities. A number of these experiments in collaboration have failed to achieve their goals (Tati 2005). In Mexico, numerous small-scale projects have demonstrated effectiveness at the pilot level, but few have been successfully developed into national programmes. And for those unusual cases where scaling up succeeded, often involving new interactions between government agencies and NGOs, the associated processes and conditions have not been well documented.

This article presents a case study of the successful scaling up of a social development programme in Mexico through a carefully negotiated partnership between an NGO and the national government. The case involves the efforts by the Mexican NGO IMIFAP (Instituto Mexicano de Investigación de Familia y Población) to expand the implementation of *Planeando tu Vida* (Planning your Life), a sexuality-education and psychosocial-competencies programme, to the national level through collaboration with the government. The case study of *Planeando tu Vida* illustrates that NGO–government partnerships can be created in ways that achieve broad social impact while preserving the NGO's core social values. We describe the stages of scaling up that IMIFAP followed for *Planeando tu Vida* and we then discuss the strategies that IMIFAP used to develop an effective partnership with government agencies.

IMIFAP – developing *Planeando tu Vida*

Since its inception in 1985, IMIFAP's principal objective has been to help marginalised individuals and families to gain control over their own lives and improve their quality of life. IMIFAP has done this by developing, replicating, and evaluating research-based educational, health, and development programmes whose scope ranges from early childhood to adulthood. To expand its social impact, IMIFAP has sought opportunities to collaborate with governments in solving discrete problems, so that successful programmes can be institutionalised and scaled up. This openness to collaboration with government has created both friends and enemies. Some NGOs and governments have appreciated this position, while others have raised objections. IMIFAP has maintained its independence by developing external sources of funding. Support for IMIFAP has come primarily from US and European foundations (80 per cent of its budget), supplemented by about 10 per cent from Mexican-based companies and foundations, 5 per cent from workshops and sales of books, and 5 per cent from the Mexican government.

IMIFAP's development of *Planeando tu Vida* involved four substantive stages: formative research, initial programme development, pilot testing, and scaling up. The stages before scaling up are generally important in programme development because they help to identify what works – but they may not always be necessary. Often it is political opportunity and implementation feasibility that determine what can be scaled up, rather than a systematic assessment of whether a programme operates well or what provides the greatest number of benefits. Next we briefly review these four stages of programme development for *Planeando tu Vida*.

Formative research

Before developing *Planeando tu Vida*, IMIFAP researchers conducted diagnostic studies to learn about the specific needs of adolescents regarding reproductive health, sexuality, and life skills, and to identify opportunities and constraints for protective sexual behaviours among adolescents. The results suggested that adolescent sexual behaviours in Mexico were strongly influenced by socio-cultural patterns. For example, a study of 865 sexually active adolescent girls in Mexico City found that those who were less accepting of broad socio-cultural

norms in Mexico were more likely to use contraceptives and less likely to become pregnant (Pick *et al.* 1991). Based on this research, detailed literature reviews, and analyses of existing sexual-health programmes for adolescents in Mexico, IMIFAP decided to develop a sexuality-education programme for adolescents, using participatory life skills.

Initial programme development

Using the research results, IMIFAP developed a preliminary version of *Planeando tu Vida* in 1988. It featured psychological, social, and biological aspects of human sexuality, covering topics such as gender roles, pregnancy, and contraceptive knowledge. The programme also included skills to prevent pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and substance abuse: skills such as decision making, communication, self-knowledge, negotiation, and assertiveness. The *Planeando tu Vida* programme had two central components: the first focused on training the adult facilitators for their own personal development, and the second involved having the adults train adolescents, who were the target population. Evaluation was an integral part of *Planeando tu Vida* from the beginning. The results of qualitative and quantitative evaluations were presented to key government officials throughout the process of programme development, as a means to influence government decisions about which programmes to consider for scaling up and why.

Pilot testing

The initial *Planeando tu Vida* programme was tested on a small scale in order to demonstrate its effectiveness and identify possible improvements. In the first evaluation, researchers compared its effects with those of a traditional sexuality-education programme in Mexico. Both programmes significantly increased knowledge about sexuality and pregnancy prevention, but only *Planeando tu Vida* showed significant changes in behavioural intentions and protective behaviours (Pick de Weiss *et al.* 1994).

IMIFAP then conducted additional pilot tests with 1632 students in public high schools in Mexico City. These tests showed that programme participation did not affect the timing of adolescents' initiation of sexual activity. Rather, the results made clear that adolescents who had participated in the *Planeando tu Vida* course used more preventive measures once they became sexually active than the students who did not take part (Pick de Weiss *et al.* 1994). These findings encouraged IMIFAP to consider scaling up the programme, because the results helped to counter the prevailing assumption that sexuality education would promote early sexual activity among youth.

Advocacy and dissemination

After piloting *Planeando tu Vida*, IMIFAP began to disseminate the evaluation results in order to gain broad-based support for scaling up. Government co-operation was necessary to gain access to the appropriate dissemination channels, including radio and television stations. In addition IMIFAP disseminated knowledge about *Planeando tu Vida* by distributing pamphlets and posters to the general public. These dissemination activities were meant to create a general awareness of the problems addressed by *Planeando tu Vida*, as well as to generate public discussion of possible solutions (Pick *et al.* 2000).

Initial advocacy activities included interviews conducted by IMIFAP with government policy makers to assess the level of support for national sexuality and life-skills education programmes. One high-level Mexican ministry official suggested that public opinion be

assessed to demonstrate the possible need for modifying socio-cultural norms and values. Gallup conducted a national opinion poll, showing that 95 per cent of the population was in favour of sexuality education from the pre-school stage onwards (IMIFAP–Gallup 1993).

The results of the public opinion poll, along with the findings of IMIFAP's own studies, were presented to cabinet ministers, the undersecretaries of education and health in Mexico and several Latin American countries, and directors of schools and health clinics, as well as other NGOs. These advocacy efforts made key stakeholders aware of the programme and its results, and promoted changes in contextual conditions to facilitate a broader acceptance of the sexuality and life-skills education programme and related issues. These activities helped to create conditions that facilitated both political and organisational scaling up by expanding the programme's support base.

Scaling up

In order to carry out broad-scale implementation, IMIFAP modified *Planeando tu Vida* to improve the training of adult facilitators who could then replicate the programme with larger numbers of adolescents in schools (quantitative scaling up). IMIFAP then began negotiating with the Mexican Ministry of Education to scale up the programme to the national level. These initial negotiations resulted in a second major pilot study of *Planeando tu Vida*, focused on the facilitators. To assess how the teachers reacted to the life-skills perspective, the central government selected a national sample of teachers who had been trained by IMIFAP. More than 95 per cent of the teachers thought the programme should be mandatory at the national level. Meetings were also held with both supportive and opposing organisations to discuss the impacts of facilitator trainings and *Planeando tu Vida* in Mexican schools.

In developing plans for scaling up, IMIFAP emphasised that the programme helped to prevent unwanted pregnancies in adolescents, a significant public-health problem. IMIFAP also argued that the programme could be implemented through the school system (Ministry of Education) and through community health promoters in order to expand the number of people that *Planeando tu Vida* could reach (quantitative scaling up). The availability of scientific evidence on the programme's impacts and the existence of an organisational plan for large-scale implementation made it clear that scaling up was the next logical step for this programme.

Meanwhile, adolescents started to ask for programme materials on their own initiative – demonstrating a clear demand by the target audience. In response, IMIFAP created a question-and-answer book entitled *Yo Adolescente* ('Me, Adolescent') (Pick and Vargas Trujillo 1995), followed by an up-dated version *Soy Adolescente* ('I am Adolescent') (Pick and Givaudan 2005), based on questions that adolescents asked during the *Planeando tu Vida* course in schools. These materials provided a way to reach adolescents outside formal training programmes. While not ideal in terms of quality of approach, the question-and-answer book proved to be excellent in terms of numbers of young people reached (more than 250,000 copies were sold in ten years).

IMIFAP educators trained health promoters, who replicated the programme with teachers in schools, and the teachers in turn delivered the programme to adolescents throughout Mexico. The goal of the programme, however, was not only quantitative scaling up, but also to assure adequate quality in the expanded version. The scaling up process, therefore, was monitored through a closely supervised cascade of assessments, in which the time and quality of implementation were measured as the programme was replicated through different levels (for example, from school supervisors to teachers to parents).

IMIFAP also sought to involve all stakeholders in scaling up. This proved important for organisational as well as political and functional scaling-up processes. IMIFAP invited more

than 30 Mexican NGOs with expertise in sexuality to work jointly in creating a PPP. After lengthy negotiations between several NGOs and the government, a new school subject was created under the title of *Formación Cívica y Etica* (Civic and Ethical Formation), with careful attention to the words used to describe the new national programme. The new course included sexuality education based on the development of psychosocial competencies as well as their application to other protective factors (for example, citizenship education and prevention of alcohol abuse). *Formación Cívica y Etica* was introduced into all seventh and eighth grades as a mandatory course in September 1999. By September 2000, a ninth-grade module of the course was introduced nationwide. Textbooks developed and designed by IMIFAP staff were among the books chosen as official materials for each grade level.

IMIFAP learned two important lessons from the processes of developing, evaluating, advocating, and scaling up sexuality education, and through the results of Gallup's 1993 and 2001 national opinion polls. First, it became apparent that if the interventions took place before adolescents began engaging in sexual activity, there was a higher probability of positively affecting subsequent sexual behaviour. Second, these assessments showed that the skills were built up through a slow, growing, and repetitive process over time (Pick de Weiss *et al.* 1994). In response, educators at IMIFAP began to develop a curriculum for younger audiences (from pre-school through ninth grade).

As with all of IMIFAP's educational programmes, interactive group activities constituted an important part of this course. The courses provide children and adolescents with integrated life-skills education at different stages of their development, encompassing themes such as planning, expression of affection, relationships with family and friends, prevention of substance abuse, gender-role expectations, communication, sexuality, citizenship, participation, values, nutrition, and care of the environment.

These experiences of scaling up sexuality education in Mexico illustrate the importance of communication and partnership between NGOs and governments. Scaling up sexuality education and psychosocial competencies from a small pilot project to a national-level programme was facilitated by a public–private partnership which brought together a well-developed programme based on documented results with a government agency that had the administrative capacity to implement the programme on a national scale. Without the persistent efforts of the NGOs and the partnership, the prevailing conservative atmosphere within the government and influential external groups would have prevented consideration of such sexuality-education programmes. The following section describes how this NGO–government partnership was constructed and strengthened.

Strategies for building NGO–government partnerships for scaling up

To scale up effective NGO development programmes, co-operation with local and national governments is usually necessary. IMIFAP used the following strategies for building an effective NGO–government partnership in this case:

- Create political support.
- Develop personal lines of communication and trust.
- Negotiate with opposition groups.
- Assure programme ownership.
- Prepare for changes in government personnel.

These strategies are similar to those described for building PPPs in other parts of the world (for example, Ramiah and Reich 2006). They can be used to bridge the gaps that arise in scaling up between what to do and how to do it.

Create political support

The initial presentations of *Planeando tu Vida* to government officials were difficult, because the government had little interest in incorporating sexuality education into its curricula. It took a number of meetings presenting the results of programmes that had proved effective in preventing unwanted pregnancies – a key goal of the administration – before some officials became interested. Once a common purpose had been established, the next step was to identify some common strategies. Here, government scepticism about *Planeando tu Vida* was primarily due to IMIFAP's insistence on extensive facilitator training, a problem that has persisted. Many officials viewed IMIFAP's 40-hour training course for facilitators as time-consuming, costly, and excessive.

IMIFAP's staff next sought a compromise that would ensure government support. The staff recognised that governments often prefer investing in new programmes rather than in long-term maintenance of existing programmes. But they also knew that IMIFAP's programme experiences showed that effective implementation depended on facilitators acquiring adequate knowledge and skills first, in order to work well with others, and that this process requires time. Using evidence from pilot studies and programme experience, IMIFAP's staff finally convinced health and education officials of the importance of personal development, and facilitator and student training. It had become clear to them that such personal training would help to maintain behaviours in the long term and assist in building closer relationships both with the teachers' union and with the target audiences, i.e. children and parents. This led to a 40-hour training course for teachers and education representatives nationwide, funded by the Ministry of Education. Unfortunately, this was a one-off provision. Subsequently, the authorities have allocated too little time for training and have conducted the programme mainly through the use of practical workbooks (in secondary school) and textbooks (in fifth and sixth grades). This example illustrates the painful fact that adaptations and cuts are sometimes necessary when expanding a programme from the small scale to the national level; it also illustrates that such compromises can have consequences for programme quality and effectiveness.

One way to develop political support within the Mexican government for sexuality education was to demonstrate that the programme was compatible with both political and public interests. IMIFAP identified these interests and presented materials on three key topics: how to make the largest impact using the smallest funds; how to find money for the programme despite budgetary constraints; and how to deal with pressures from political parties. These issues are often perceived as political obstacles to efforts to scale up.

An additional approach that helped to create political support for sexuality education was to show government officials that they would benefit from the partnership developed with IMIFAP and other NGOs, because the programme directly addressed the needs of the target population. IMIFAP argued that using a needs-based programme developed by an NGO would help to improve the general public's trust and the image of the Mexican government. This effort, including statements by members of the target population, reminded government officials that communities often trust NGOs more than they trust the government; and it helped to convince the officials of the programme's additional benefits.

Develop personal lines of communication

In order to solidify government support for the pilot intervention and the scaling-up process, IMIFAP communicated directly and frequently with government officials. These relationships are especially important in Mexico, where close relationships with influential actors are critical to many government decisions (Sorian and Baugh 2002). In addition to developing strong

personal relationships with government officials, IMIFAP found that building partnerships with local organisations improved the effectiveness of scaling up. For example, labour unions played a key role in scaling up sexuality education. Union support was gained by designing the programme so that it emphasised the personal growth of teachers as well as their role as replicators.

A major challenge for the NGOs was to decide how much the staff were willing to modify parts of the training and materials in order to scale up. For instance, the initial *Planeando tu Vida* curriculum included sections on masturbation and homosexuality. After discussions with government officials from the departments of education and health, IMIFAP realised that these components would have to be removed, at least in the printed materials for nation-wide training programmes, if sexuality education was to be expanded into the Mexican school system on a national basis. IMIFAP agreed to follow the government's recommendations and removed both topics from the training materials, because the staff decided that, within limits, it was preferable to see an adapted programme implemented rather than have a programme completely rejected. Evaluation of the revised nationwide programme showed that while these topics were not formally included in the curriculum, they almost always came up during question-and-answer sessions between students and facilitators. This approach allowed facilitators to address controversial issues in a way that was acceptable to both the NGOs and the government officials.

Negotiate with opposition groups

The main obstacle to scaling up came from conservative government and opposition groups. In Mexico, a highly vocal conservative minority has long impeded official acceptance of sexuality and life-skills education programmes (Pick *et al.* 2000). Although conservative groups such as the National Union of Parents (UNPF) and Mexican Family (FAME) represent a minority of Mexico's population, such groups are powerful players in the policy arena because of their resources and access to the media (González Ruíz 1994).

Opposition groups pressured the government against adopting the programme. Several groups took out paid advertisements in national newspapers, denouncing the programme. In 1991, the Catholic Episcopate and the National Union of Parents launched a media campaign against the Ministry of Education. Part of this campaign accused IMIFAP of ignoring the 'universal' values of Catholicism and promoting 'sexual libertarianism' by offering information on contraceptives and addressing masturbation as an alternative expression of sexuality (Pick *et al.* 2000).

IMIFAP employed a number of strategies to address these opposition groups. A steady and discrete process of advocacy helped to demonstrate to the general public and key government officials the need for comprehensive sexuality education. IMIFAP also employed a strategy of negotiation with limited compromises, such as the removal of homosexuality and masturbation from the written curriculum, as noted above. The two most important strategies for addressing opposition groups were first to win the support of the moderate opposition, and then to meet one-to-one with conservative opponents and emphasise common goals, such as helping women, improving parenting skills, and enhancing education (Pick *et al.* 2000).

Establish programme ownership

Because the 'owners' of social development programmes often control the programmes and receive public recognition for the impacts, programme ownership can be a contentious issue when scaling up. Conflicts over who gets credit for the programme and who administers the funds are often strong barriers to the development of effective NGO–government partnerships.

Often, NGOs feel that because they developed the programme, they should control its implementation. Governments, on the other hand, commonly believe that their public image will be negatively affected if they are not both the author of the programme and the agency in charge of it. Thus, governments often argue that once a model is ready for large-scale implementation, government agencies should be in charge *and* be the official authors.

In this case the debate over ownership was resolved when *Planeando tu Vida* was provided to the Mexican government agency DIF (similar to a ministry of the family), which adopted it as part of its official national programme mainly for out-of-school adolescents, giving credit without demanding ownership or authorship. DIF covered the costs of national training sessions and purchased the corresponding educational and promotional materials. Mexico's Ministry of Education, on the other hand, decided to create its own sexuality-education programme through official textbooks for the fifth and sixth grades, and to use workbooks developed for secondary schools by the private sector. The training sessions were conducted by both government and non-government institutions. Programme ownership thus had to be negotiated to produce a compromise that was mutually acceptable to both government and IMIFAP.

Programme ownership also became an obstacle when *Planeando tu Vida* was transferred to other countries, where IMIFAP often encountered hesitation because the *Planeando tu Vida* programme was viewed as Mexican (and not Peruvian, Colombian, etc.). Once this initial hesitation was overcome, some administrations were reluctant to give credit to the programme, and instead asked local NGOs to adapt the original *Planeando tu Vida* materials and activities so that their programme differed from the original, in order to create local ownership.

IMIFAP approached these conflicts over programme ownership in the development of subsequent programmes by keeping extensive records of every version of the IMIFAP materials. Such records included different versions of materials to be printed, photos of activities such as meetings and training sessions, minutes of meetings, and agreements reached. This extensive record keeping provided persuasive documentation about the original programme's ownership and helped to ensure that the process of dissemination would not undermine its integrity and effectiveness. Even with such documentation, however, negotiations with both governments and NGOs are still needed to provide some local ownership when a programme is adopted in another national setting; at the same time, the quality of the programme must be protected so that the activities achieve their intended effects.

Prepare for changes in government personnel

Changes in government personnel can create significant obstacles to scaling up. In the IMIFAP case, repeated negotiations with health and education officials had to be conducted, because elections and other changes in government created new administrations with no knowledge of the programme or its history.

To address these changes in administration and problems of continuity, IMIFAP established relationships with mid-level civil servants in addition to high-level officials. The broad range of relationships ensured that some personnel would be familiar with *Planeando tu Vida* despite political changes. As noted above, NGO–government partnerships are often based on personal relationships. However, if the partnership is not also based on more permanent structures, its sustainability may be undermined. On the other hand, basing such partnerships solely on the signing of formal agreements is insufficient, because an implementation gap often exists between written agreements and government action. Maintaining a balance between personal relationships and formal contracts was necessary for the scaling up of sexuality education in Mexico.

IMIFAP also recognised the need to build relationships of trust in order to overcome the differing interests of stakeholders. IMIFAP's staff sought to develop mutual trust at many levels through continuous communication, through maintaining a win–win approach to negotiations so that all parties would feel rewarded, through close follow-up of agreements and training programmes, and through reaching a balance which limited the time and energy spent on meetings. These efforts paid careful attention to the needs and interests of all parties and played an important role in scaling up sexuality education in Mexico.

Conclusion

Although NGOs often create effective small-scale social development programmes that governments can use, the process of scaling up such programmes to the national level remains difficult. This article presented one case of successful scaling up through an NGO–government partnership. IMIFAP was involved in the scaling up of sexuality education by adapting and extending contents, materials, and populations reached; by expanding geographically within and outside Mexico; and by pursuing an explicit set of advocacy strategies. Through partnerships between IMIFAP, other NGOs, and the ministries of education, family, and health at the state and national levels, *Planeando tu Vida* has been extended throughout Mexico, and to nine countries in Latin America, to Latino groups in the USA, and to Greece. In addition, training in the one-to-one negotiation procedures used in *Planeando tu Vida* has been provided to NGOs in Uzbekistan. To date, more than 40,000 facilitators in Mexico have been trained in sexuality-education programmes and psychosocial competencies, and the programmes have reached more than 17.5 million children, parents, and adolescents.

To address the issues and challenges of scaling up, IMIFAP designed a number of strategies to overcome each obstacle. These strategies included demonstrating to government officials the benefits of investing funds in programme development, working one-to-one with individual members of opposing groups, maintaining detailed records of each version of the curriculum and materials in order to establish programme ownership, and creating continuity in implementation (despite political changes) by working with mid-level government officials and promoting common understanding of objectives and activities.

Finally, while many of IMIFAP's strategies involved negotiation and compromise, the organisation also defined a clear limit to the concessions that it was willing to make, based on protecting the programme's fundamental mission. While IMIFAP staff were willing to remove some topics from the original curriculum of *Planeando tu Vida*, they refused to change the intervention's health-behaviour-and-life-skills approach – teaching adolescents how to make autonomous and informed decisions, rather than telling them what to do. Remaining firmly committed to the programme's fundamental aspects while showing a willingness to compromise on less central aspects increases the likelihood that effective and innovative small-scale efforts will become effective national-level programmes. A similar process has been successfully adopted in several other IMIFAP programmes. Currently the school-based programme *Yo Quiero, Yo Puedo* ('I Want To, I Can') (Pick and Givaudan 1996), the health-promotion programme *Si Yo Estoy Bien, Mi Familia También* ('If I Am Well, So Is My Family') (Venguer *et al.* 2007) provided at the community level, the micro-enterprise development programme (IMIFAP 2002), and a mass-media strategy are being adapted and incorporated into an integrated health-promotion-and-poverty-reduction model in partnership with several government agencies and the United Nations Foundation.

Nonetheless, many challenges remain in scaling up development programmes. As Mexico prepared for a new government coming into office at the end of 2006, IMIFAP and its allies sought to ensure that sexuality education as part of building psychosocial competencies

would not only be continued but would be strengthened, with both in-school and out-of-school young people from pre-school onwards, and that the quality of the instruction would be assured. This requires scaling-up policies and educational materials as well as extensive and long-term teacher training. The strategies described above will be critical to assuring continued success for sexuality education in Mexico. The ultimate hope is that scaling up will become normalised over time, that (in the words of James D. Wolfensohn, immediate past president of the World Bank) 'Over a few years, people will talk about scaling up development projects as if there's nothing new to it, as if the concept has always been with us' (World Bank 2006).

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Note

1. The authors contributed to this article in the following ways: Susan Pick was responsible for the conceptualisation and organisation of the fieldwork, and for most of the writing; Martha Givaudan was responsible for the supervision of the fieldwork and preparation of the manuscript; and Michael R. Reich was involved with conceptualisation and writing.

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