
SITE VISIT: Home Day Care in Venezuela

By Robert G. Myers in "Investing in Early Childhood Programs: Toward Definition of a World Bank Strategy". Paper prepared for The World Bank. 1992.

A home day-care program was established in Caracas, Venezuela in 1974 to provide mothers working outside the home with access to child care. The government-financed program built upon, upgraded and extended existing informal childcare arrangements developed by families in the poorer neighborhoods in which the program was put into effect. Daycare mothers, who had to be at least 18 years old, received a small stipend (paid partly by the government and partly by the mothers using the service) to attend to no more than five children under the age of six for 12 hours a day in their homes. Care included an established routine of health, nutrition and educational services. The program equipped homes, which had to meet safety and hygiene requirements, with some furniture and materials.

To implement the program, the Children's Foundation, a quasi-governmental organization presided over by the wife of the president, worked with government agencies, including those responsible for housing, public works, health and social services, social security and nutrition. A technical-support team consisting of a social worker, a health worker, and a teacher, which served groups of 20 homes, helped the daycare mothers to carry out their task. A neighborhood coordinator was responsible for each group of 60 homes. According to an evaluation of the program:

The day care mothers provided the children with the necessary custodial care, are alert to their basic needs, abide by the stipulated schedule, know the norms governing the program, have basic knowledge of the areas of health, nutrition and child development, prepare and serve meals, protect the children against dangerous situations, take care of the children's personal hygiene and give the children a home-like environment until the arrival of their mothers. (de Ruesta 1978, 20)

Though less expensive for the government than formal day care in large nurseries, this daycare program was still relatively costly (well over US\$1,000 per child per year), limiting its growth to approximately 2000 homes. In 1989, however, the moribund program was given new life as part of a set of "compensatory" programs introduced by the government. Changes made in the program included: a shift from 5 to 8 children per home, a shift in supervision to one person for each 25 homes (instead of 3 people for 20 homes), incorporation of non-governmental programs in program execution and of local communities in administration, decentralization, extension to poor families even if the mother was not working, forgiveness of payment for families living in especially precarious economic conditions, and the introduction of a new modality called the multi-home in which 30 children are cared for by three ECCD Workers. The new program,

currently being evaluated, attended 239,000 children in 42,000 day care homes in 1993, with the participation of 297 NGOs.

Variations of the home day care model can be found in Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica and Brazil.

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Early Childhood Counts: Programming Resources for Early Childhood Care and Development.
CD-ROM. The Consultative Group on ECCD. Washington D.C.: World Bank, 1999.