Promoting equitable access to government services in Peru: The National Program PAIS (Platforms of Actions for Social Inclusion)

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PROJECT DATA

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Region Latin America	**Sector** Governance
Implementation Years 2013–2021	**Implementing Agencies** Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), National Bank, the National Registry of Identity and Civil Status (RENIEC), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP).
Lead Practitioners Cecilia Medina (National Director)	
Development Challenge Social Inclusion	**Delivery Challenges** Geographical barriers Inter and intra-governmental relations Skilled Human Resources Change in Leadership & Administration

Introduction

Peru is a country with considerable cultural and geographic diversity, and with wide socioeconomic disparities across the population. Historically, people living in the Andean and Amazonian regions of Peru have had less access to development gains than residents of other parts of the country. This delivery note examines a Peruvian government program that sought to address these gaps: the National Program of Action Platforms for Social Inclusion (Plataformas de Acción para la Inclusión Social; PAIS). The PAIS program aimed to promote more equitable access to public services.[1] This program was meant to facilitate social inclusion by bringing public services (including health, education, civil registration and the issue of identity documents, capacity building, and social protection activities) closer to citizens who inhabited remote areas. These rural residents were often the most vulnerable and impoverished people in Peru.

The program began with a pilot program led by the Peruvian Navy in a remote part of the Peruvian Amazon in 2013. It was subsequently expanded,

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1 The name of the program is a play on words that signals its national reach, as in Spanish, país means "country."

first across the Amazon region and then across the Andean parts of Peru. Since 2016 PAIS has been led by the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), facilitating its national reach. This note discusses the origins of the program, examines how it was scaled up, and the delivery challenges (non-technical challenges that emerged during implementation) that the PAIS had to confront during this process.

Development Challenge

Peruvians living in the remote areas of the Andean and Amazonian regions of the country lacked easy access to key social services. Citizens living in those regions have historically experienced a lack of state presence and government services. This is due both to social factors and to the fact that infrastructure penetration in these areas is insufficient to overcome their complex geographic barriers and remoteness. One study, for example, notes that "the most adverse geographical regions are those with the least access to public infrastructure."[2]

The Intervention

PAIS aimed to close this gap in service delivery by bringing a variety of key services more directly to rural and isolated communities. This note examines two components of this effort. The first component was the Mobile Social Action Platform (Plataforma Itinerante de Inclusión Social; PIAS). The PIAS was rooted in civic actions that the Peruvian Navy (Marina de Guerra del Perú; MGP) conducted in native communities in the river basins of Loreto, Peru's largest department, which spans much of the Peruvian Amazon. These actions were implemented based on a comprehensive security approach that aimed to strengthen the presence and legitimacy of the Peruvian state in border areas and thereby to combat illegal activities.

The PIAS used river ships under the command of the MGP to deliver services to isolated communities in the Amazon. These ships were retrofitted to turn them into floating platforms for the delivery of various government services (such as medical care, telemedicine, identity registration, monitoring of educational management, banking services, and social programs) to populations living in the most remote areas that could only be accessed by river.

Preparations for this initiative began in April 2012, when the MGP initiated agreements for coordinated activity with local and national entities to launch the pilot of PIAS in the Napo River basin. By June 2012 many ministries and the executive branch[3] were committed to participation in the program, and contributed to joint planning of the first PIAS mission. Services would be delivered via the PIAS vessels, but provided through the participation of a number of ministries. Participating ministries included the Ministry of Health (MINSA), Ministry of Education (MINEDU), Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Population (MIMP), Ministry of Economy (MEF), Ministry of Culture (MINCUL), Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), the National Bank (Banco de la Nación), and the National Registry of Identity and Civil Status (RENIEC).

On June 2013, the President of the Republic of Peru, Ollanta Humala Tasso, and the National Commander of the MGP formally inaugurated the first PIAS mission on the Napo River. PIAS subsequently expanded to cover the rest of the Amazon basin.

By 2016, the effort to extend services to remote areas was further scaled up. The program was put under the authority of the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS). The PAIS was formally constituted in 2017, and plans began to move beyond providing services in the Amazon. Consequently, as the program shifted to provide services beyond communities accessible by river, the locus of service provision in Andean communities was moved into facilities that were initially administered by the Ministry of Housing. These facilities were called TAMBOS.[4] These provided a fixed platform from which to provide services to the surrounding rural areas. The PAIS program, then, started officially to operate through two components: PIAS (itinerant platforms) and TAMBOS (fixed platforms).

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2 Escobal, J. and M. Torero (2000), Does Geography Explain Differences in Economic Growth in Peru? Research Network Working Paper, IDB. Washington D.C.

3 That is, the Presidency of Peru and the Cabinet Ministries.

4 This name refers to a construction from the Inca empire, where a Tambo (from Quechua "Tanpu") was an enclosure, located next to an important road, and used as a shelter and as a storage center.

Addressing the Delivery Challenges

PAIS faced a number of delivery challenges as it worked to scale up across the country. To respond to these challenges, government officials had to make a number of adaptations throughout the course of the program.

Geographical barriers and remoteness

Peru is made up of diverse ecological and geographic regions, and the geography of the country presents important challenges for effective service delivery. In order to overcome these difficult geographic conditions, and to provide government services effectively in the most rural and remote areas, implementers employed strategies that enhanced the mobility of civil servants charged with delivering services, while bringing them closer to the citizens they needed to reach. This had different implications in different geographic areas. The Amazon is sparsely populated, and lacks land roads across vast swathes of its territory. To reach residents of rural areas in this part of the country meant navigating long stretches of river, and boats were the main means of transportation. In the early years of the program, the PIAS used river boats to reach populations that could only be accessed via waterways.

In the Andes, meanwhile, rural communities generally lacked high-quality transportation infrastructure. The rugged geography of the region (valleys, peaks, plateaus, mountains, volcanoes, precipices, etc.), and other aspects of the socio-political context, make it difficult for the overnment to provide the necessary infrastructure. In this geographic and topographic context, delivering services via river-going ships was not possible. The MIDIS opted to draw on pre-existing structures that were originally under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing, called TAMBOS. These offices were located throughout the Andean region, and moreover they were sufficiently well-equipped (e.g., with internet connections and physical facilities) to provide a range of government services.

As PAIS began to provide more services from the TAMBOs, it became apparent that executive managers (staff members in charge of providing services in the field) needed additional support for transportation. Considerable difficulty of transportation in the mountainous areas of the Andes (even by car roads to remote areas are often hard to navigate) meant that many executive managers were spending a great deal of time traveling via bus to perform their duties. This was addressed by the provision of motorcycles and allocation of fuel to the executive managers, which enabled them to reach program beneficiaries.

Inter- and intra-governmental relations

As the program expanded, inter-institutional relationships became more complex. The institutional arrangements for governance of the program were repeatedly adjusted to ensure effective inter-sectoral coordination and management of the program's budget.

The first change in management to adjust to the complexity of dealing with several public institutions occurred in October 2013, when the Cabinet of Peru (Presidencia del Consejo de Ministros; PCM) was designated to coordinate inter-sectoral cooperation among the different ministries and agencies participating in the PIAS. A Framework Agreement for Inter-Institutional Cooperation was signed between the PCM, the MIMP and the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF). This agreement provided for cooperation and secured the resources needed to build more PIAS ships.

By 2014, the PCM, through the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Social Affairs (CIAS), which was chaired by the MIDIS, formed the Amazon Native Communities Working Group.[5] The group aimed to link the Strategy of Social Action with Sustainability (EASS) – under which the PIAS had been taking place – with the national strategies for social inclusion and development of the Amazon (the latter was a particular priority of the presidency at the time). By connecting the objectives of the EASS with the objectives of the national strategies of the ministries, budgetary resources allocated for each national ministerial strategy would be available for the implementation of the PIAS.

By 2015, as the program scaled up to multiple areas of the country, the MIDIS was formally designated to take the lead in implementing PAIS at the national level. In 2016, the TAMBOs (which until then were under the authority of the Ministry of Housing) were formally placed

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5 This working group was made up of a number of ministries and agencies: MINAGRI, MINAM, MINCUL, MINDEF, MIDIS, MINEDU, MINEM, MEF, MIMP, RREE, MINSA, MTC, MVCS and PRODUCE.

under the MIDIS. This helped to consolidate efforts under the MIDIS as the lead agency.

It also proved important to ensure that budgetary processes were in place to support PAIS. Some adjustments were made to the budgeting process to ensure operational coherence, coordination of objectives and timeframes, and allocation of resources across the different institutions that participated in PAIS. Originally, each institution that participated in the program had its own Operative Institutional Plan (POI) each year. This meant that each institution had its own autonomy to manage its own budget, timeframe, and objectives. Sometimes this created logistical issues, such as timely availability of resources for PAIS being provided from one ministry, but not from others. This challenge was resolved after 2015, when PAIS received an independent budget for the program as a whole.

Skilled Human Resources

Organizational and staff capacity also represented an important challenge. To ensure professional standards of citizen services, the MIDIS instituted training for staff in the PAIS offices.   These trainings included topics related to intercultural understanding of the communities, as well as professional standards. Executive Managers received training to ensure that they were qualified with ISO 9001: 2015, which is an international standard that regulates Quality Management Systems (QMS). The certificate demonstrated that these civil servants understood the needs and expectations of the users and stakeholders of the program. Executive managers also received constant training on the services to be provided in each community. Staff members also received training in intercultural approaches, and in the native language of the communities (including Aymara, Kukama, and Wachiperi) so that they would be able to provide specialized services to speakers of these languages.

Lessons Learned from the Program

The PAIS program offers a number of potential lessons for the implementation of ambitious programs that seek to provide more equitable access to government services in countries with difficult geographies and diverse social landscapes.

Importance of empowering staff on the ground

One key component of the PAIS program has been to empower staff on the ground and increase support for them over time to perform their duties and provide services effectively. One civil servant interviewed for this work asserted that it is fundamental "to value and empower the action of the Executive Managers (through training, and through giving them a certain level of autonomy and resources to do their duties) since they are the more direct, real, and physical contact between the citizens and the state in action in the field." She elaborated that "the executive manager becomes the real, active and the most human presence of the State for the citizens reached by this program."[6] This increased support for the executive managers on the ground was manifested in the provision of training, as well in adjusting approaches to ensure that staff had appropriate means of transportation, through the provision of motorcycles.

Ensuring connections between institutions and across hierarchies

As with many programs that involve a number of different institutions, it proved critical for the PAIS program to seek a real synergy among the different actors. Cecilia Medina, the National Director of the PAIS program, noted that "Each sector has its own mandate, but once it is jointly verified that by articulating actions, the results are more effective for all mandates, then we speak of true synergy." Medina also asserted that "The policy must go from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top."[7] In other words, high-ranking officials (those "at the top") should take into account recommendations from officials in the field, because these civil servants working at the ground level are familiar with local realities and the actions that need to be taken to ensure the success of a given intervention. In this vision, all officials should bear in mind that their main objective is to serve the needs of local communities and those who have been excluded from development processes. Finally, this implies that communities (collectively and/or individual community members) should participate proactively in the program and make their voices heard when necessary. To ensure public

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6 Author interview with Haydee Carrasco.
7 Author interview with Cecilia Medina.

participation, awareness campaigns were carried out in order to catalyze the active participation of the communities, and thus ensure effective implementation of each intervention. These were launched one or two weeks before each intervention by advertising on local radio stations, local TV channels, and other means, such as "word of mouth advertising" with the support of local authorities, mayors, and traditional leaders of the communities. During these campaigns the details of each upcoming intervention were communicated, as well as which specific services would be offered to the respective community.

Understanding cultural and local context for effective delivery

As PAIS extended its operations across the country, it found that it was important to offer differentiated services for the different needs that it encountered in different parts of the national territory. Depending on the needs and assets of each community, communities received tailored services to better address local needs. For example, in a community with an economy based on raising guinea pigs, TAMBO officials asked the Ministry of Production for support, enabling officials to train community members to make their economic activities more sustainable and, if possible, give them the tools to expand their business (e.g., basics in marketing and finance). To ensure the success of such interventions, it was important to carry out in-depth diagnostics beforehand, in order to identify the needs of each community and ensure the provision of appropriate services.