

PACTO

**Núcleo Ciência Pela Infância (NCPI)**

External Evaluation - 2020  
Effectivity & ECD tendencies

FINAL  
REPORT

APRIL, 2021

**EVALUATION TEAM**

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**MENTORING**

Kiki Mori  
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**P/ACTO**  
organizações regenerativas

# SUMMARY

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We would like to thank all the people who were involved and have been essential to enable the evaluative process described in this document.

We thank the 14 members of the NCPI Executive Committee and team for many hours of interviews, dialogues and meetings; the 25 experts on early childhood development who we interviewed, the 22 members of the Scientific Committee, the 141 ELP alumni, the 30 participants of iLab and the 98 participants of the International Symposia who responded to our surveys. We also acknowledge 8 public managers and activists who shared their experience on state and municipal level initiatives and Alexandre Menezes, from the consultancy Global Health Strategies Brasil, for the dialogue.

We thank Laura Zanchetta, for the precious support in the active search for participants in NCPI activities, to Rafael Castanha, for the bibliometric studies, to the ANDI researchers, for the generous dialogue about the state and municipal plans for early childhood, to Jane Valente, for the connection with managers and activists for our interviews and Melissa Pomeroy, for the attentive and meta-evaluative reading of the final report.

# 1 Presentation

We have reached the end of a long evaluative journey. After nine months of work, we present the tenth and last evaluative product. The summative character of this report required a synthetic and evaluative text, surpassing the descriptive style of most of the partial products. It also demanded recommendations for the future of the Núcleo Ciência Pela Infância (NCPI) to be formulated in a more direct way, providing inputs to decision making processes.

For readers with less time available, the main findings and recommendations are presented in the executive summary. Following the summary, we provide a background on NCPI's history, strategy and operation. Such contextualization aims to characterize NCPI as the object of this evaluation and to justify the evaluation questions and methods.

The report then presents a methodological note that explains how the evaluative questions were answered and how the analysis evolved from the descriptive style of the partial reports to the evaluative character of the final report. This is where we explain the mixed methods approach that has guided the evaluation.

In its fifth and longest chapter, we present the answers to the evaluation questions. The narrative combines facts, reports and perceptions, and the arguments were built in order to answer the questions, which required analysis, but also the curation of a great amount of information produced in the evaluation. Our intention was to find the most consistent answers, given method, object and context limitations.

The concluding remarks focus on the possible uses of this evaluation, connecting the study to the planning process of NCPI phase IV. We hope that the investments in this evaluation will prove to be relevant to the future of NCPI, in its strategic and operational dimensions.

Previously to this final report, the evaluation process produced a sequence of partial reports and reflective dialogues that broadened our knowledge and stimulated evolutionary processes. We hope that this report will add new input that will help to design a future of greater meaning and relevance for the NCPI and for the advancement of the early childhood development agenda in Brazil.

## 2 Executive summary

### About NCPI and the evaluation process

1. Created in 2011, the Núcleo Ciência Pela Infância (NCPI) is a collective impact initiative that produces, translates and disseminates knowledge on early childhood development (ECD) and strategies based on scientific evidence, to inform and influence effective and scalable public policies and services for Brazilian children living in the most vulnerable conditions.
2. NCPI is one of the leading Brazilian experiences of collaborative philanthropy and has Fundação Maria Cecília Souto Vidigal (FMCSV) as its backbone organization. In 2018, Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) and Porticus joined as partners, together with the Faculty of Medicine of the University of São Paulo (FMUSP), Insper, the Harvard Center on the Developing Child (HCDC), and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard (DRCLAS).
3. The initiative adopts four transversal strategies: (1) **capacity building**: building and leveraging the capacity of leaders, mobilizing them to elaborate and qualify public policies; (2) **science and innovation**: producing scientific knowledge, supporting and testing solutions that can achieve impact at scale; (3) **communication and dissemination**: developing a communication strategy that informs and engages the main stakeholders; (4) **monitoring and evaluation**: learning to leverage synergies between actions (workstreams), and evaluate the contribution of NCPI itself to the system.
4. After conducting evaluations related to its two initial phases (2011-2014 and 2015-2017), from August 2020 to April 2021, NCPI has undergone an evaluation aimed at understanding its effectiveness, including the current third phase 2018-2021 in a panorama of ten years of operation. The evaluation should produce inputs to support the design of the fourth phase of the initiative (2022-2025).
5. The assessment was guided by four questions formulated by the NCPI Executive Committee and presented in the terms of reference: (1) Has NCPI remained attentive and responsive to the needs, challenges and opportunities within the ECD ecosystem? (2) To what extent do NCPI offerings (products, content, methodologies and tools) increase our target populations' understanding, knowledge and perceptions of ECD? (3) To what extent have our target populations implemented and/or incorporated

the knowledge, tools and resources offered by NCPI into effective actions?  
(4) To what degree have NCPI's initiatives encouraged the exchange of information and experiences among our target populations and has this fomented a stronger ECD community?

6. The evaluation team has applied a mixed methods approach that includes successive approximations of the object and data triangulation. Analysis of documents, individual interviews, structured surveys, netnography, bibliometric analysis and reflective workshops enabled the investigation of experiences, the verification of facts and the construction of the perceptions of different audiences: 25 key actors and specialists in the field of ECD, 22 researchers linked to the NCPI Scientific Committee, 141 former participants in the Executive Learning Program (ELP), 30 participants in iLab, 8 actors linked to the implementation of state and municipal public policies and 98 participants in the International Symposia.
7. The evaluation process consisted of nine partial reports, seeking to foster a gradual process of reflection by the main stakeholders. While periodic meetings with the NCPI executive team dealt with the operational management of the evaluation, six meetings with the Executive Committee and one with the NCPI Council concerned its strategic aspects. Thus, part of what is presented in this final report will not come as a surprise to the main stakeholders. Additionally, with care for good report writing practices, many of the details presented in the partial reports will not be repeated in this final product.

### Question 1. Has NCPI remained attentive and responsive to the needs, challenges and opportunities within the ECD ecosystem?

8. NCPI is perceived as one of the most prominent actors that have contributed to the creation of a transdisciplinary and multisectoral field recognized as "the early childhood field in Brazil." The analysis demonstrates that NCPI has played an important role in the genesis of this field, especially due to ELP, but it also shows how the identity of NCPI has been strongly linked to FMCSV, as a driving force and backbone organization.
9. NCPI has been able to identify, raise awareness, train and instrumentalize actors strategically inserted in parliament, civil society, the judiciary, public management, academia and the press. In its first two phases (2011-2017), these contributions were supported by an excellent analysis of demands and opportunities, especially for the need of public policies based on evidence and capable of reducing inequalities, which generated actions adherent to reality.
10. In its third phase (2018-2021), which was covered by this evaluation until the

end of 2020, the worsening of Brazilian social and political conditions, the deactivation of processes due to the pandemic, as well as tactical limitations of the program itself caused NCPI to lose in strength. NCPI's ability to articulate and mobilize actors decreased in a more polarized and less cohesive ECD field. It has not yet succeeded in enabling the social technologies that are still in production in the iLab. Neither has it oriented its strategies in a decisive way to support the implementation of policies and services in the municipalities, which have become the frontiers of ECD.

11. Another agenda which has received timid responses from NCPI concerns racial inequalities and the way in which they accentuate the already known Brazilian social inequalities, including in early childhood. The working paper under development at the moment, the support by CEERT in the iLab and recent adjustments in the executive team should be celebrated, but the fight against structural racism, which has gained greater proportions in society, will require more attention in the coming years
12. However, NCPI's loss of effectiveness is also the result of more comprehensive changes in the context and challenges that have arisen in recent years, especially since 2016. In this period, federal policies were deprived of financing, intelligence of state and the inductive pulse of previous years, which overloaded municipalities, without providing them with support for implementation, which is a critical situation considering their limited technical and financial capacities. This has been even further aggravated by Covid-19.

## Question 2. To what extent do NCPI offerings (products, content, methodologies and tools) increase our target populations' understanding, knowledge and perceptions of ECD?

13. All research strategies lead to the conclusion that NCPI has been successful in identifying, raising awareness, expanding knowledge and engaging its target audiences. 88% of ELP alumni survey respondents, 74% of International Symposia participants survey respondents, 54% of iLab survey respondents and 91% of the Scientific Committee survey respondents agree that they have become better agents in favour of ECD based on their participation in NCPI activities.
14. This is evidence of important gains of political, bureaucratic and scientific capital by the participants. The experiences with NCPI, especially in the ELP, Scientific Committee and iLab have (a) demonstrated the importance of science to formulate public policies, (b) engaged people in the formulation of public policies; (c) stimulated articulations and collaborations in the field; (d) promoted leaders in institutions and sectors; (e) stimulated the development of social projects and technologies and (f) engaged more people, institutions and support for the ECD agenda.

15. In the last decade, concepts related to ECD have spread throughout the Brazilian society, which is recognized by several actors and by an analysis of media and social networks. Initially limited to a community of activists and scientists, the concept has grown through the efforts of NCPI, reaching other environments. The role of NCPI in this expansion has been to form *champions*, as already mentioned, but also to systematically offer working papers, lectures and debates that have reached different spaces and a wide audience either through institutional channels of communication or the general media.
16. All six working papers produced by the Scientific Committee have been of relevance to the field of early childhood. They have been cited 52 times in academic papers and four of them are referenced in important documents in the field of ECD: [Avanços no Marco Legal da Primeira Infância](#), [PNAD - Aspectos dos cuidados das crianças menores de 4 anos de idade](#), and [Nota técnica: Comitê Interinstitucional Protetivo do Estado do Paraná](#). The interviews and surveys confirm the importance of the working papers, which is reinforced by the more than 6,000 accesses to the documents on NCPI's website. The paper [Repercussions of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Child Development](#) has been the most accessed.
17. More than 1,700 people participated in the 7 editions of the International Symposium, which were considered relevant by the key actors interviewed and the survey respondents: by bringing practical child care content (72%), by offering up-to-date science-based knowledge (55%), by promoting meetings and articulations (55%) and by updating understandings about childhood (42%). The videos of symposia lectures and debates are available on [the NCPI Channel on Youtube](#) and have been watched more than 270,000 times over the years, thus expanding the production's reach in terms of time and capillarity. Further, the symposia regionalization strategy has shown to be important in mobilizing local actors, while the editions held in São Paulo have received a larger media cover.

**Question 3. To what extent have our target populations implemented and/or incorporated the knowledge, tools and resources offered by NCPI into effective actions?**

18. Recent advances in the institutionalization of ECD-related policies in Brazil were recognized as having a close relationship with NCPI's activities by all informants in this evaluation. It is worth mentioning the Legal Framework for Early Childhood (2016), the Criança Feliz Program (2016) and the National Pact for Early Childhood (2019), in addition to other achievements at state level and in some Brazilian capitals.
19. Among the ELP participants, 17 people reported having participated in

important actions at the national level: (a) the production of the Legal Framework for Early Childhood, (b) the review of the National Early Childhood Plan, (c) the construction of the content of early childhood education in the National General Curriculum Base (BNCC), (d) the implementation of actions aimed at the right of the child in the National Council of Justice, (e) the audit of ministerial actions aimed at ECD, (f) the monitoring of the Criança Feliz Program, (g) the development of the new Child Health Booklet (Caderneta da Criança) and the National Policy for Integral Child Health Care; (h) inclusion of early childhood education in the National Textbook Program.

20. The analysis of initiatives at the state level also revealed that, among the 26 states and the Federal District, 13 (50%) have formally adopted some form of ECD state policy, program or plan in recent years, a clear sign of the advance of the ECD agenda in Brazil. At least in Acre, Alagoas, Amazonas, Ceará, Pernambuco and Piauí, there are strong indications of NCPI's influence in the formulation of such initiatives. The [Partial Report 11](#) presents more detailed information on this research strategy.
21. The interviews also indicate that NCPI has stimulated and influenced a series of actions in states and municipalities, in the press, civil society organizations and academia. Some examples of a long list of achievements include: the insertion of ECD in state health plans; the implementation of ECD actions in the prison system; the elaboration of municipal early childhood plans, the implementation of regional [intersectoral committees](#); the production of documentaries; and the offer of courses in universities. Such movements were mainly influenced by participation in the ELP, reading of working papers and participation in the International Symposia.

#### Question 4. To what degree have NCPI's initiatives encouraged the exchange of information and experiences among our target populations and has this fomented a stronger ECD community?

22. Each of the NCPI's offerings has mobilized a certain set of actors and stimulated studies, exchange of information and different levels of collaboration between them. As already demonstrated, the very genesis of the ECD field is an irrefutable effect of a movement in which NCPI occupied a prominent position, alongside others, while it added actors and fostered a more cohesive field oriented to common goals.
23. Already highlighted achievements such as the Legal Framework, the National Pact, Criança Feliz and state level policies are the result of joint efforts of several actors and could only be achieved because interests were aligned and key actors in the ECD field were able to prioritize agendas and

agree on actions. This is another clear effect of the ECD field becoming politically strong and producing effects.

24. The communication and the relationship among actors have changed considerably since 2011: the field has become more diverse and more powerful, which is a sign that it has gained strength. At the same time, major changes in Brazilian politics, such as the interruption of Dilma Rousseff's mandate, the approval of EC95, the launch of Criança Feliz and the 2018 presidential elections, have polarized the ECD field and made it less cohesive. In this process, NCPI achieved its highest relevance in the early years, by producing meetings, articulations and synergies, making good use of the International Symposia, working papers and in the projection of its specialists in media exposures. For the reasons already mentioned, during phase III, NCPI has lost part of its leading role and capacity to guide the field.
25. The actions developed by NCPI, with emphasis on ELP, have created a favorable environment for the work of other organizations in the field. Many of them have received parallel support from FMCSV, BvLF and Porticus to take on roles that favour ECD, such as the National Early Childhood Network (RNPI), the National Agency for the Rights of the Child (ANDI), the Alana Institute and even the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In the last case, the work of NCPI was recognized for increasing the capacity of actors in the field and thus creating fertile soil for investments<sup>1</sup>.

### Main accomplishments: actions of great importance to the ECD field

26. **Awareness-raising, training and supporting key people** | Enabling ELP participation of people who already were or with the potential to become key actors (*Champions*) in the field of ECD in Brazil.
27. **Advocating for actions based on scientific evidence** | Using scientific evidence to demonstrate the relationship between ECD and human development.
28. **Producing consistent and accessible knowledge** | By offering working papers, technical publications and lectures (symposia and webpage), NCPI has provided updated and relevant knowledge to a large volume of actors.
29. **Identifying and fostering social entrepreneurs** | The call for proposals and selection of impact initiatives for iLab resulted in a group of 500 interested

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013, a third (3/9) of the projects supported by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation was either conducted by a researcher who is a member of the NCPI Scientific Committee, by an ELP alumni or supported an iLab participant. Similarly, in 2018, out of 14 projects supported, one was conducted by another Scientific Committee member and one by another ELP alumni.

parties. 70 of them participated in the second stage, acquired knowledge and reported applying it to their organizations.

30. **Promoting synergies between NCPI and other initiatives** | The intentional articulation of NCPI outputs (ELP alumni, publications, symposia etc.) with existing agendas and partners of FMCSV, BvLF and Porticus, and in specific territories has increased the effectiveness of strategies.

## Main limitations: tactics and processes that need to be developed

31. **Decreased political presence** | In the first years, NCPI's engagement in dialogues and political articulations was vigorous, something that has slowed down over time, currently rendering a less prominent role for NCPI in the ECD field. Such reduction is related to the way in which partner organizations inserted NCPI into their strategic agendas and political articulations, but also to the way in which NCPI used the production of its workstreams politically.
32. **Limited alumni engagement efforts** | The 570 ELP participants are an invaluable technical-political body. The group brings together relevant technical scientific capital (mastery of the subject of ECD), political capital (capacity to mobilize agendas) and bureaucratic capital (capacity to transform institutions). In addition, they remain mobilized and active within ECD and interested in NCPI. However, NCPI has not managed this community in a consistent and strategic way<sup>2</sup>.
33. **Little progress in the production of social technologies at iLab** | Participants recognize that the initial phases of the laboratory, in which ideas and entrepreneurs were identified and the method of project development was shared, were relevant and useful. However, the subsequent phases, in which few initiatives are tested, have proven to be slow, poorly connected to the reality of the context and, so far, irrelevant in the provision of social technologies for ECD. Greater details of this argument can be found in [Partial Report 12](#).
34. **Low grantmaking capacity** | NCPI investments are principally applied to the internally operated work streams, with little donation of resources to other actors with an executive profile so far. 2021 represents a shift in this perspective, as the volume of donations in the recently launched Center for Research Applied to Early Childhood (CPAPI) is significant and must be celebrated. While recognizing the choices of NCPI and the fact that its financing partners already engage in grantmaking, we would like to provide a reminder that several agents have emphasized the importance of donations to civil society organizations, the central theme of the last two

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<sup>2</sup> The same argument could be used for iLab participants.

GIFE congresses, and that this practice could strengthen the ECD field in coming years.

35. **Low epistemic plurality** | Although economic and neuroscientific arguments continue to be relevant in raising awareness and mobilizing actors in the formulation of policies and services for ECD, the evaluation indicates that their hegemonic use by NCPI impoverishes public policy formulation and alienates parts of the relevant stakeholders.
36. **Absence of a racial equity agenda** | So far, NCPI has not used racial markers or affirmative actions to promote racial equity in either the composition of its governance and management structures (Council, Executive Committee, Executive Team and Scientific Committee) or in its workstreams, which weakens its position in the field.

## Recommendations

Aiming to promote reflections and contribute to the design of NCPI's phase IV, we conclude the evaluation with nine main recommendations. They are addressed to different levels of governance and management.

### Recommendation \_ R1 | To the NCPI Council

In the strategic plan, it is opportune to connect the future new triennial stages of the NCPI (2022-2024; 2025-2027; 2028-2030) to the 2030 Agenda, especially to support the capacity of states and municipalities to ensure priority, resources, services and actions that focus on the early childhood development of the most vulnerable populations, observed according to class, race and gender markers, in line with the idea of "leaving no one behind".

### Recommendation \_ R2 | To the NCPI Council

The evaluation shows that NCPI strategies and work streams are still valid. However, the tactical plan requires adjustments.

- **New ELP editions** should be developed in collaboration with states and municipalities, include actors formally involved with ECD and link their participation to real interventions. CDC / Harvard continues to be a highly valuable partner, while the demand for knowledge and experiences that support policy implementation and service qualification requires new researchers, institutions and knowledge to be added to the ELP, curated by Harvard.
- **New editions of iLab** should consider alternative methodological paths for the production of social technologies: faster, more multi-sectoral, more viable.
- **Regional symposia, both in-person and digital**, should be developed in alliance with regional actors, in order to increase the adherence of programming to local contexts.
- **New ways of translating science** should be developed guided by the experiences of various institutions and agencies that, in recent years, were formed in Brazil with this perspective,

for example this [Network of researchers](#).

- [Revised Scientific Committee](#), with more regional, racial and epistemic plurality. Small financial investments can accelerate the production of scientific articles, essays, lives and opinion pieces, which can increase the supply of knowledge and the potential for advocacy.

#### [Recommendation \\_ R3 | To the Executive Committee](#)

While recognizing the initiatives already promoted by NCPI in 2020, in partnership with Insper, additionally, new actors can contribute with knowledge to further enhance the quality of NCPI offering within the agenda of implementation of policies, programs and services. In the field of social assistance, for example, in addition to recommended dialogues with [CONGEMAS](#), researchers such as [Renata Bichir](#) (EACH-USP) and [Gabriela Lotta](#) (FGV EAESP) produce high quality work which would serve as relevant input.

#### [Recommendation \\_ R4 | To the Executive Committee](#)

It is essential to build a management strategy for the community of ELP and iLab participants, in an effective perspective of alumni or Customer Relationship Management (CRM). There are several possibilities, such as: (a) to promote seminars and meetings for exchange of experiences and updating (*pocket ELP*); (b) to commission the production of essays, narratives of experience, opinion pieces and lives from alumni, linking this community to the production and dissemination of knowledge of NCPI; (c) to monitor and support the presence of alumni in other arenas, networks and agendas relevant to ECD, promoting them as ambassadors of the cause; (d) to offer support (seed capital) for events and actions of state, regional or local nature, with the potential to support the ECD.

#### [Recommendation \\_ R5 | To the Executive Committee](#)

Bearing in mind that the effectiveness of NCPI's actions is greater to the extent that its outputs are articulated with actions undertaken by its partners, the new phase should be planned with this perspective, with two questions. For partners: how can we take advantage of the legacy and outputs of NCPI to enhance our interventions in the field of ECD? For NCPI: considering the strategies of partner organizations, how to design more convergent and synergistic actions and how to ensure the best executive management of these actions?

#### [Recommendation \\_ R6 | To the Executive Committee](#)

NCPI Phase IV requires the issue of racial equity to be treated in an affirmative manner and without shyness. In order to advance workstreams and management-governance, it seems opportune to count on external support, establish goals for change and carry out periodic evaluations.

#### [Recommendation \\_ R7 | To the Executive Committee](#)

Our analysis leads us to recommend that: (a) members of the Scientific Committee should consider having a fixed-term mandate to regulate their participation, which could take care of the process of renewing the group; (b) the composition of the Scientific Committee should better reflect Brazilian diversity (racial criterion), institutional diversity (regional criterion) and thematic diversity of research on ECD in Brazil (epistemic criterion); (c) members of the Scientific Committee should be financially supported for the production of essays, opinion pieces, working papers and lives in order to accelerate the translation, production and dissemination of knowledge.

#### [Recommendation \\_ R8 | To the Executive Team](#)

In order to revitalize NCPI's political presence in the ECD field, which was evidently strong in the early years, NCPI's executive team should engage in the development and implementation of a political agenda. We recommend the Executive Committee to be

central in analyzing the context and defining the agenda, and we also recommend that the executive team occupy the leading role, which implies actions such as:

- Presence in the ordinary and extraordinary structures of RNPI, with protagonism and possible leadership of working groups.
- Periodic monitoring (bimonthly dialogues, for example) of the Parliamentary Front of Early Childhood, with the purpose of identifying opportunities to connect the support of ELP, iLab, Symposia and technical productions etc.
- Presence and protagonism in the Thematic Network on the Rights of Children and Adolescents of GIFE, with the perspective of promoting actions related to early childhood, identifying opportunities and connecting support from ELP, iLab, Symposia and technical productions etc.
- Developing agendas for approaching, analysing demands and opportunities, and collaborating with the National Council of State and Municipal Health Secretaries (CONASS and CONASEMS), with the National Union of Municipal Education Directors (UNDIME) and the National Council of Municipal Assistance Managers (CONGEMAS), in addition to the possible link also with the National Confederation of Municipalities (CNM), National Front of Mayors and with some government schools, such as the National School of Public Administration (ENAP), the João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP / MG ) and others.

### Recommendation \_ R9 | To the Executive Team

After the long evaluation process that we went through together, data collection provided input for descriptions, analysis and conclusions. We wish to remind you that the final report is an important part to complete the valuation, but that [the other products](#) can be as useful in the next phase. It is important that phase IV takes care of:

- Supporting the members of the executive committee to make a joint context analysis that help them share "challenges and opportunities", which is an essential step for collective impact.
- Revisiting the Theory of Change, with the purpose of balancing expectations of results for the next three years and, if possible, targeting 2030 and the subsequent phases of the NCPI.
- Designing a planning structure using the perspective of OKR (Objectives & Key Results) in order to project clear results, also establishing production goals that can guide the executive team and favor the monitoring process.
- Reviewing and agreeing on roles, responsibilities, instances and management modes, in order to speed up production and decisions and reduce points of stress and friction.
- Analyzing and agreeing on possible new executive partners, in view of the need for tactical adjustments of the ELP, iLab, Symposia, and translation and knowledge dissemination actions.
- Designing and implementing a process for managing NCPI information and databases, taking advantage of the efforts made in this evaluation to unify, clean and update contacts. This effort will expand the capacity to monitor actions, support the CRM strategy and may reduce investments in future evaluations.