

**Tier 2 Pilot Grant Letter of Intent: Establishing Proof-of-Concept  
Winter 2023**

**Project Information**

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Proposed Project Title</b>     | A child sexual abuse intervention in Latin America: A pilot study of the family boardgame “Kit Mi Escudo” |
| <b>Approximate Budget Request</b> | \$65,000  |

**Applicant Information**

N. Jeanie Santaularia, Assistant Professor  
Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of Washington  
njsanta@uw.edu  
Finance point-of-contact: epigrant@uw.edu

Gabriela Bustamante Callejas, Profesora  
Escuela de Salud Pública, Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
gbustamante@usfq.edu.ec

Paulina Ponce, Directora Ejecutiva  
Fundación Azulado  
[paulina.ponce@fundacionazulado.org](mailto:paulina.ponce@fundacionazulado.org)

Carmen Gonzalez, Associate Professor  
Department of Communication, University of Washington  
cmgonzal@uw.edu

India Ornelas, Professor  
Health Systems and Population Health, School of Public, University of Washington  
iornelas@uw.edu

## Overview of Proposed Research Plan

**Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a global health issue that infringes on the rights and wellbeing of children.**

One in 5 women and 1 in 13 men report experiencing CSA in their lifetime [1]. CSA has severe immediate and lifelong consequences, including mental health issues, substance abuse, and other chronic health problems [2-4]. There is limited research on CSA in many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) due to a lack of funding and surveillance [5-6].

**Interventions to prevent CSA in Latin America are limited.** According to a 2022 systematic review, only eight CSA programs have been evaluated within LMICs[7]. Of these, only two were conducted in Latin America. In Ecuador, MPI Bustamante and Fundación Azulado found that a school-based self-protection program increased and maintained CSA knowledge post-intervention[8]. Fundación Azulado is a non-profit organization in Ecuador dedicated to preventing child abuse for over 10 years.

**Mi Escudo kit is a family board game designed by Fundación Azulado to improve children's knowledge and attitudes regarding CSA protection skills.** Azulado created this kit to encourage open communication between caregivers and children about bodily autonomy, recognizing discomfort, identifying trustworthy individuals, and responding to potential risks. Our goal *is to generate proof-of-concept data that validates the effectiveness of this kit in raising awareness and prevention of CSA.*

### Our aims:

1. Assess changes in knowledge and attitudes regarding CSA protection skills among children ages 5 to 12 after interacting with Mi Escudo
2. Determine if changes in CSA knowledge and attitudes are maintained 6 months post-intervention
3. Identify barriers and facilitators of Mi Escudo and its implementation through in-depth interviews with caregivers and children post-intervention

**Approach:** We will conduct a 12-month group intervention pilot study in Ecuador. In collaboration with Azulado, we will select ten partner schools of different socioeconomic status (5 intervention, 5 control). We will randomly invite 40 families with children 5 to 12 years old per school to participate. Families will take the kit home with incentives raffled among participants.

**Data collection:** Participants will complete a brief demographic survey, the Children Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire-short and the "What if" Situations Test-III. These are validated scales that assess CSA knowledge and attitudes and are currently being adapted to be culturally sensitive for Ecuadorian children (ongoing project MPI: Bustamante, Ponce and Santaularia). Children will answer questionnaires at three time points: before any intervention, 3 weeks after kit distribution, and 6 months post-intervention. We will invite 10 families per intervention school for in-depth interviews to identify barriers and facilitators of Mi Escudo and its implementation. Azulado has established protocols for responding to any CSA cases identified during the project.

**The Mi Escudo kit has significant potential as a tool in the global fight against CSA.** By establishing empirical evidence of its efficacy, we can pave the way for broader adoption globally, including in immigrant communities in Washington State. This proof-of-concept interdisciplinary project will provide pilot evidence to apply for the new NIH RFA Unveiling Health and Healthcare Disparities in Non-Communicable and Chronic Diseases in Latin America. [9]

## References

1. WHO. Estudio multipaís de la OMS sobre salud de la mujer y violencia doméstica contra la mujer. Geneva; 2005.
2. Dube SR, Felitti VJ, Dong M, Giles WH, Anda RF. The impact of adverse childhood experiences on health problems: Evidence from four birth cohorts dating back to 1900. *Prev Med (Baltim)*. 2003 Sep 1;37(3):268–77.
3. Briere J, Runtz M. Differential adult symptomatology associated with three types of child abuse histories. *Child Abuse Negl*. 1990;14(3):357–64.
4. Anda RF, Felitti VJ, Bremner JD, Walker JD, Whitfield C, Perry BD, et al. The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. A convergence of evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci*. 2006 Apr;256(3):174–86.
5. Veenema TG, Thornton CP, Corley A. The public health crisis of child sexual abuse in low and middle income countries: an integrative review of the literature. *Int J Nurs Stud*. 2015 Apr;52(4):864–81.
6. Stoltenborgh M, van Ijzendoorn MH, Euser EM, Bakermans-Kranenburg MJ. A global perspective on child sexual abuse: meta-analysis of prevalence around the world. *Child Maltreat*. 2011 May;16(2):79–101.
7. Fantaye, A. W., Buh, A. W., Idriss-Wheeler, D., Fournier, K., & Yaya, S. (2022). Interventions promoting child sexual and reproductive health and rights in LMICs: a systematic review. *Pediatrics*, 149(Supplement 6).
8. Bustamante, G., Andrade, M. S., Mikesell, C., Cullen, C., Endara, P., Burneo, V., Yépez, P., Saavedra, S. A., Ponce, P., & Grunauer, M. (2019). "I have the right to feel safe": Evaluation of a school-based child sexual abuse prevention program in Ecuador. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 91, 31–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.02.009>
9. PAR-23-303: Unveiling Health and Healthcare Disparities in Non-Communicable and Chronic Diseases in Latin America: Setting the Stage for Better Health Outcomes Across the Hemisphere (R01 - Clinical Trials Not Allowed). [grants.nih.gov](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-23-303.html). Accessed January 12, 2024. <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-23-303.html>