Peru and Guatemala face high rates of child malnutrition, especially in rural predominantly indigenous areas. Multi-sector nutrition strategies are in various phases of implementation, which include the widespread distribution of multi-micronutrient supplements (sprinkles) through public health services. Based on fieldwork with rural mothers in the Ch’orti’ region of Guatemala and the Quechua-speaking Andes in Peru, this seminar will focus on local response to supplementation programs, for which lack of adherence is an on-going concern. It will be argued that sprinkles are not rejected on cultural grounds, as oft assumed by public health practitioners, but rather limited by conditions of poverty, mediated by women’s relationship with the state, and how these programs feed into their existing fears and desires for their families. Many women face a limited degree of decision-making space. Their experiences invite us to raise questions regarding the potential for these mother-centred programs as well as for the underlying medicalised approach to food scarcity.

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