Costa Rica

Country programme document
2013-2017

The draft country programme document for Costa Rica (E/ICEF/2012/P/L.16) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2012 annual session (5-8 June 2012).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2012 second regular session of the Executive Board on 14 September 2012.

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	1.4
Mortality rate of children under 5 years (Per 1,000 live births)	10
Underweight (%, moderate and severe, 2008–2009)	1[a]
(%, urban/rural, poorer/richer)	..
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, adjusted, 2008)	44[b]
Primary school enrolment (%, net male/female, 2005)	87/89[c]
Students who complete primary school (%, male/female, 2008)	94
Use of improved drinking water sources (%)	97
Use of improved sanitary facilities (%)	95
Adult HIV prevalence rate (%, age 15 to 49, m/f, 2009)	0.3
Child labour (%, male/female age 5 to 14, 2002) [d]	5
Registration of birth (%, under 5 years)	..
(%, male/female, urban/rural, poorer/richer)	..
Gross national income per capita (US$)	6,580
One-year-olds immunized against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (%)	88
One-year-olds immunized with measles vaccine (%)	83

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women are available at www.childinfo.org.

[a] Estimates for the underweight children category are based on the child growth standards adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2006.

[b] The reported maternal mortality rate is 21 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the National Statistical and Census Institute (INEC), Annual Demographic Indicators Bulletin, 2010. The maternal mortality ratio of 44 is based on data from the Inter-agency Group for Maternal Mortality Estimation (WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Bank together with independent technical experts), adjusted to take into account underreporting and misclassification of maternal mortality. www.childinfo.org-maternal_mortality.html.

[c] According to survey data.

[d] Preliminary data for the child labour reported in 2012 shows that 2.2% of the girls and boys of age 5 - 14 years were working.

The situation of children and women

1.   Costa Rica is an upper middle income country with an established democracy and a high human development index, occupying the twelfth place in Latin America and the Caribbean and ranking 69th out of 187 countries in human development for 2011.

2.   The total population of Costa Rica was 4.3 million in 2011, 30.4% of which was persons under the age of 18.[1] The 2011 census shows the country's multicultural nature: 2.42% of the total population are indigenous (104.143), 1.05% are of African descent (45.228), 6.72% are people of mixed race (289.209) and 8.9% are immigrants (385.899)[2].

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[1] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.

[2] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.

3.   The country has achieved a significant level of progress, as appears from its social indicators and its good progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially in literacy (97.6%)[3] and primary education coverage, infant mortality, HIV/AIDS (the prevalence of VIH and AIDS for 2010, is 9.25 and 3.90 per 100.000 respectively)[4] and environmental sustainability. Over the last few years, however, the country has had difficulty maintaining its pace of social progress.

4.   Inequality in income distribution is gradually rising: as measured by the Gini coefficient,[5] it stood at 0.542 in 2011. Income concentration in 2009 was such that households in the poorest quintile received 5% of all income, while the richest quintile accounted for 50.4%.

5.   The reduction of social and regional disparities remains one of Costa Rica's major challenges, as is indicated by the 2010 Millennium Development Goals compliance status report; indigenous people, persons of African descent and migrants are the groups concentrated in areas with the lowest human development indices.

6.   In 2011, 21.6% (201.810) of households were in condition of poverty, with 6.4% living in extreme poverty.[6] In 2009, 13.4% of households not considered to be living in poverty are at risk of becoming poor, which means that about 35% of households have trouble meeting their basic needs.[7]

7.   In 2011 poverty was the lot of 1 in every 3 minors (481.764 children and adolescents were living in poverty, equivalent to 35.94% of the total. Of these 150.954 -11.26%- were in extreme poverty). This indicator has been rising..[8]

8.   The rise in poverty has been contained by some valuable social programmes, such as the transfer programme "Avancemos", social welfare benefits and improved pensions of   Non-contributory Regime.

9.   Despite government efforts in recent years in the area of child care and development, the governmental solutions of comprehensive care on offer do not reach the coverage levels required by the population aged 0 to 5, which in 2011 totalled some 405.701children. [9]

10.   The child mortality rate (CMR) remained at 9.6 per thousand live births in 2011. The highest CMR, at 11.7, was found in the province of Limón, which is home to large population groups of African and indigenous descent, and is also the province of Costa Rica having the lowest human development index. [10]

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[3] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[4] Ministry of Health (MS). Department of Health Monitoring, 2012.
[5] INEC.
[6] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[7] Seventeenth State of the Nation report on Sustainable Human Development (PEN), 2010. Calculation based on 2010 ENAHO data.
[8] INEC. ENAHO 2011
[9] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[10] INEC vital statistics.

11. Enrolment rates in 2010 indicate that the main challenges were to be found at the preschool level (age 4 to 5), with 56.9% coverage, as well as at the final stage of secondary education, with 46.3% diversified education coverage (ages 16 and 17).[11]

12. In 2011, Ministry of Public Education (MEP) data show that 15.3% of students of seventh grade repeat that level. Moreover, while 93.09% of children under 12 years were in school, by age 14 only 86.39% attended, and by 16 only 78%.[12]

13. In secondary education, of all adolescents admitted in 2009, only 43.8% graduated on time.[13] In addition, nearly 45,000 adolescents between 12 and 17 were neither working nor studying, 50% of these rural residents with low educational levels and poverty rates above the national average.[14]

14. Dropout rates are highest among the people of marginal rural and urban areas as well as migrant boys, girls and adolescents and those of African or indigenous descent. The indigenous population has an illiteracy rate of 7.7%, whereas the comparable rate for the rest of the population is 2.4%. Meanwhile, although integration efforts have led to significant reductions in disparities, immigrant children's attendance figures show differences from those of the Costa Rican population as a whole. The greatest disparity appears in the 13 to 17 age range, with percentages of 67.94% for immigrants and 81.69% for Costa Ricans.[15]

15. National census data for 2011 indicate that people with disabilities make up 10.52% of the population (nearly 452.849 persons)[16]. The challenge for the country is to put in place a policy that will enable these persons to fully participate in society, in education and in recreational activities.

16. Various forms of violence against children and adolescents are still met with, such as commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, physical abuse and neglect. Judicial statistics for 2009 record that in that year some 4,000 new charges were laid for sexual offences against children. Those most liable to suffer domestic violence are women, whatever their age group. Ministry of Health (MS) figures show that in 2008, 2,345 girls and adolescents were victims of domestic violence.

17. Violence against women, children and adolescents is increasing, especially sex-related homicides and domestic violence. The 2010 homicide rate was 11.2 per 100,000 inhabitants; Limón was the most violent province, with a rate of 18 per 100,000.[17] Violence caused by organized crime and drug trafficking entails additional risks that need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

18. In 2010, the National Children's Hospital dealt with more than 2,555 cases of abuse and assault, or about seven cases a day. A study by UNICEF and partners showed that 64.5% of parents and caregivers believed corporal punishment was sometimes or always the best means of teaching, and patterns of upbringing and education that do not involve corporal punishment are little known.

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[11] Seventeenth PEN report, 2010.
[12] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[13] Second Country Report, Millennium Development Goals, 2010.
[14] Seventeenth PEN report, 2010.
[15] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[16] INEC. X National Census of Population and IV of Housing, 2011.
[17] Office of Planning and Operations, Judicial Investigation Organization (OIJ).

19.   In its concluding comments on the 2011 Country Report, the Committee on the Rights of the Child observed that rights protection programmes, especially those relating to violence, sexual exploitation and child labour, were often not implemented at the local level and failed to reach the most disadvantaged communities.

20.   The Committee also emphasized the need to develop and strengthen a broad statistical information system providing disaggregated data on all areas covered by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to establish an Observatory that would pay particular attention to disadvantaged children.

Main results and lessons learned from the earlier cooperation programme (2008–2012)

Main results

21.   The technical assistance and advocacy of UNICEF and its partners were key in facilitating the process of devising and adopting public policies and strengthening national legislation.

22.   As part of the implementation of the current Country Programme Document, UNICEF and its government and NGO partners supported the development and approval of: (a) the first National Policy for Children and Adolescents (PNNA) for 2009–2021, (b) the definition of the operating structure of local child protection systems (SLPs) and issuance of an executive decree governing institutions' participation therein, (c) a judicial policy on access to justice for children and adolescents, (d) the development of treatment and assistance models during the preparation of the executive decree instituting the National Network of Child Care and Development (REDCUDI), which defines early childhood care services as one of the priorities of the National Development Plan (PND) for 2010–2014, and (e) inclusion of the protection of children and adolescents in the National Plan for Strengthening Local Governments. Support was also provided to the Ministry of Justice and Peace in drawing up its National Plan for the Prevention of Violence and the Promotion of Social Peace for 2011–2014 and developing a violence prevention strategy that would promote arts, culture, recreation and sport in vulnerable communities.

23.   UNICEF forged a public-private partnership on child-rearing practices in the context of the adoption of the 2008 Law on the Right of Children and Adolescents to Discipline Free of Corporal Punishment or Humiliating Treatment. A study was done on knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) that is to serve as a baseline for enforcement of the Law and has been adopted as a monitoring tool by the National Children's Council. The KAP study, the first of its kind in Latin America, was supplemented by knowledge generation and communications measures implemented through the Eduquemos en Positivo campaign (Let's Educate Positively) to promote salutary changes in child-rearing practices among fathers, mothers and caregivers.

24.   In support of the MEP, UNICEF helped develop the Convivir programme (Programme for Harmonious Coexistence in Schools), which introduces institutional reforms and tools to help education centres address violence through an approach that promotes coexistence; teacher skills and institutional capacities for addressing intercultural education have been enhanced; and reform of the musical education, civics and social studies curricula has been promoted. These initiatives,

aimed at discouraging dropouts and improving the relevance of education, have resulted in a progressive decline in high-school dropout rates.

25.   With UNICEF support and with a view to establishing and strengthening SLPs, the National Child Welfare Institute (PANI) has promoted the mobilization of institutions, adolescents and community organizations. Local networks with a central focus on violence prevention have been established in 14 cantons whose children are highly vulnerable. UNICEF has involved municipalities in SLPs with the goal of forming an alliance with the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development and the Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance (IFAM) and giving children's concerns a place in their plans and policies.

26.   In partnership with the Ministry of Health, a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) was carried out to analyse disaggregated statistical data on children and adolescents, and in particular on discrimination against indigenous and migrant children and those of African descent; the survey will serve as a monitoring tool and will influence public policy.

Lessons learned

27.   The 2010 Mid-Term Review of the Cooperation Programme (MTR) showed that the activities of UNICEF and its partners had helped bring about innovative initiatives and a national consensus at the inter-agency level between government and civil society, putting certain approaches on the public agenda, and providing impetus and support for the definition and development of national and local policies. The Programme's ability to coordinate strategies and work networks and so provide tools for the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and adolescents has been recognized.

28.   Joint and complementary work at the national, municipal and community levels has enabled policies and programmes to be more quickly put in place. Strategic knowledge generation through studies and evaluations, communication and promotion of the rights approach, coupled with direct action strategies in communities, have been important Programme strategies in advocating for and influencing public policy-making and the mobilization of key actors at the national and local levels. In addition, priority continues to be given to following up the actual enforcement of laws and policies in accordance with international instruments in force.

29.   Other key areas of work in support of the country's efforts are still ongoing: monitoring of the observance of the rights of children and adolescents, development and enhancement of surveillance and enforcement mechanisms, as well as the establishment of statistical information systems designed to pinpoint and analyse disparities in the status of the most disadvantaged children.

Country programme, 2013-2017

Summary budget table

	(Thousands of United States dollars)		
Programme component	*Regular resources*	*Other resources*	*Total*
Development and comprehensive protection of	2 250	3 600	5 850

Programme component	(Thousands of United States dollars)		
	Regular resources	Other resources	Total
children and adolescents			
Monitoring and analysis of respect for children's rights	1 125	1 800	2 925
Intersectoral	375	600	975
Total	**3,750**	**6,000**	**9,750**

Programme preparation process

30.   Preparation of the cooperation programme was based on ongoing dialogue with partners, through meetings with government authorities, civil society organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and consultations with other United Nations agencies.

31.   It incorporated the results of the 2010 MTR and the 2010 Programme Performance Assessment, the concluding comments to the Fourth Country Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) and of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2011), the strategic priorities of the Government as embodied in the 2010–2014 PND and the 2009–2021 PNNA, and the second Millennium Development Goals implementation status report.

32.   The Country Programme Document was drawn up in parallel with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), thus generating synergy in work undertaken in partnership and in programme priorities.

Objectives, key results and strategies

33.   The Programme will help Costa Rica comply with the observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Its components are instrumental in supporting attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, national priorities, Latin American educational goals and UNICEF's medium-term goals.

34.   The cooperation programme seeks to help Costa Rica to sustainably reduce disparities in well-being and opportunities between children and adolescents owing to their different geographical, social and ethnic origins, as well as those arising from gender and the exposure of children and adolescents to violence. It will seek to apply and prioritize strategies to strengthen national and local capacities for managing, monitoring and evaluation based on the rights approach, together with strategic knowledge generation, the interchange of experiences and South-South cooperation.

35.   The Programme comprises four strategic thrusts to ensure respect for the rights of children and adolescents: (a) integrated early childhood development; (b) enhancement of the quality of education; (c) prevention of violence in the family, the school and the community; and (d) monitoring, surveillance and analysis of the actual implementation of public policies and programmes, with emphasis on the local level.

36.   The Programme seeks to make visible the plight of the most socially disadvantaged children and adolescents and to put it on the public agenda, while focusing its efforts on strengthening the capacity of public institutions to manage

social policy; encouraging intersectoral and inter-agency cooperation; and helping the country to organize service offerings, in particular in communities that are vulnerable on account of their low human development index.

37. Communications for development will support programme implementation and the design of strategies to put children's concerns on the national and local agenda so as to raise awareness of the rights of the child, create spaces for the participation of children and adolescents, and promote positive changes in attitudes and behaviours. To achieve that goal, the focus of work will be on four main areas: advocacy, information, social communications, and alliances. Horizontal (or "South-South") and Triangular cooperation will be encouraged as a strategy for the exchange of best practices, innovations and lessons learned.

Programme components

38. The 2013–2017 cooperation programme consists of two programme components: (a) comprehensive development and protection of children and adolescents; and (b) monitoring and analysis of respect for children's rights.

Comprehensive development and protection of children and adolescents

39. The first component should ensure that, by the end of 2017, in Costa Rica: (a) children receive useful, high-quality education and have greater access to integrated early childhood development, to reduce social disparities and inequalities; and (b) children and adolescents enjoy greater comprehensive protection, enabling mechanisms to be strengthened and innovative strategies implemented to prevent and address, through a rights-based approach, the various manifestations of violence in school, families and the community.

40. Costa Rica has made great strides in formulating public policy consistent with international frameworks. This component will focus on enhancing national and local capacity for the implementation of public policy and inclusive early childhood care and education programmes, to meet three fundamental challenges: (a) poor quality of, and limited access to, early childhood integrated development and care services; (b) high educational lag and dropout rates and problems of relevance and quality within the education system; and (c) high levels of violence against children, adolescents and women, aggravated by a lack of coordination between institutions at the local level to respond to situations that violate rights.

41. As regards integrated early childhood development, support will be provided for national processes aimed at the adoption of inclusive policies and innovative models with the goal of improving the coverage and quality of integrated development, protection and pre-school education, in particular by: (a) forging partnerships to make early childhood education a key issue in the country's development; (b) capacity building at public institutions and civil society organizations and strengthening of the linkages between them, to pursue the development of innovative and cost-effective comprehensive early childhood care models that are sustainable and reflect a gender perspective; (c) monitoring and promoting opportunities for policy dialogue so as to build consensus and reduce coverage gaps in preschool education; and (d) promoting positive child-rearing practices and attitudes.

42. In education, support will be provided to national processes aimed at formulating and implementing strategies to improve the quality of education and reduce educational lag and dropout rates. The Programme will support: (a) curricular reforms that take account of multiculturalism and gender issues and seek to enrol and keep in school all children and adolescents, whatever the geographic areas and sociocultural conditions in which they may live; (b) monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of plans for harmonious coexistence in schools; and (c) the systematization and dissemination of innovative models aimed at strengthening intercultural education in schools.

43. In terms of comprehensive protection, the Programme will strengthen civil society's institutional capacity and coordination between its various organizations, to prevent and respond to all the various manifestations of violence against children and adolescents in school, families and the community. Its focus will be on: (a) enhancing national and local protection systems and mechanisms intended to detect and respond to manifestations of violence in accordance with international standards; (b) supporting the formulation and enforcement of a coordinated violence prevention strategy that will lead to changes in behaviours and practices in school, families and the community; (c) promoting municipal policies and plans for children as a part of the comprehensive protection system for children and adolescents in high-priority municipalities; (d) advocating for the development and evaluation of innovative experiments in the promotion of sport, culture and recreation as a strategy for the advancement of children and adolescents' integrated development with full protection of their rights.

Monitoring and analysis of respect for children's rights

44. Costa Rica has made significant progress in children and adolescents' survival, development and protection; however, their well-being and opportunities vary with their sex, geographical origin, ethnicity (indigenous people and those of African descent) and social status.

45. The purpose of this component is to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring respect for the rights of children, especially those more disadvantaged and subject to social exclusion, in line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It is expected that by 2017, children and adolescents will have access to a set of evidence-based policies and programmes in accordance with the principles and standards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, through systematic monitoring and an increase in national and local capacity to generate quality information.

46. Technical assistance will be provided in certain programme areas to improve the quality and relevance of indicators and data analysis at the national and local levels both, with an emphasis on disaggregated data generation and the analysis of disparities, including gender inequalities, with a view to the adoption of effective policies, programmes and strategies to integrate the most disadvantaged children and adolescents into society.

47. The purpose of this component is to achieve the following results: (a) implement a mechanism to monitor the rights of children and adolescents and the realization of those rights; (b) generate updated, disaggregated statistics and qualitative data on the plight of children and adolescents; and (c) strengthen the

capacity of civil society organizations and the State to produce and analyse disaggregated data.

48.   The baseline data of the National Census and the MICS survey, which form an essential data set for purposes of monitoring and evaluation, will be made available to the cooperation programme.

49.   Support will be provided for the establishment of a children's rights information system to help analyse the effectiveness of universal public policies and of programmes for social protection and social investment in children at the national and local level. In addition, steps will be taken to enhance systems to monitor observance of the rights of children and adolescents.

50.   Under this component, the following strategies will be pursued: (a) advocate for and support monitoring of the actual observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, (b) generate and exchange knowledge and monitoring of disparities, (c) develop assessments and analyses of reproducible, evidence-based, innovative experiments and high-impact strategies that contribute to the implementation of social policies, and (d) institute monitoring and analysis of social budgets and real expenditures at the national and local level.

Intersectoral component

51.   Includes programmes' operating costs and the cost of cross-cutting items and communications.

Relationship to national priorities and UNDAF

52.   Thanks to UNICEF's active involvement in the UNDAF preparation process, it has been possible to link the main challenges of the protection of the rights of children and adolescents with the coordination of inter-agency efforts. In developing the Programme, attention has been paid to its strategic contribution to the 2013–2017 UNDAF, with special reference to the following foci: (a) promotion of equality, equity and access to opportunities for human development; (b) strengthening of democratic governance; and (c) promotion of citizens' security, coexistence and access to justice.

Relationship with international priorities

53.   The 2013–2017 cooperation programme is correlated with the priorities of UNICEF's 2006–2013 medium-term strategic plan: the first component addresses focal areas 1, 2, 4 and 5; the second, focal area 5. These focal areas are related to the Millennium Development Goals, especially as regards poverty reduction, ensuring universal primary education, and the prevention of maternal and child mortality.

54.   In designing the Cooperation Programme, the Concluding Comments on the Fourth Country Report (2011) and the General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were taken into account, together with the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2011), ILO Convention 169 and the 2021 Education Goals approved by Costa Rica at the Twentieth Latin American Summit.

Major partnerships

55. UNICEF will pursue and strengthen its partnerships with government: ministries and national institutions, the judiciary, the Legislative Assembly and, at the local level, municipal governments; civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations; centres of knowledge and universities; communications media; the private sector and United Nations System agencies.

56. The Programme's main partners will be the following ministries: MS, MEP, MJ, Interior and Police, Social Welfare and Family, Decentralization and Local Development, Culture and Youth, Sport and Recreation; PANI, the National Bureau of Migration and Foreign Affairs, the National Department for Community Development, the National Women's Institute, the Costa Rican Institute for Sports and Recreation, IFAM; the judiciary and the Legislative Assembly; municipal governments; and the Office of the Ombudsman.

57. UNICEF will maintain its official ties to the Government of the Republic of Costa Rica through the Ministry of Foreign Relations (MRREE) and of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN).

Programme supervision, evaluation and management

58. Tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the status of children and adolescents are part of the Programme's strategies for developing tools and data to monitor and evaluate policies, plans and programmes and the investment of national and local resources in children and adolescents.

59. UNICEF's major partnerships for purposes of monitoring and evaluation will be with MRREE and MIDEPLAN, in close cooperation with national ministries and institutions as well as with the relevant local governments, NGOs and community organizations. At the technical level, periodic planning, monitoring and evaluation sessions will be held with the Programme's executing agencies; these will include the MTR in 2015 as well as the periodic UNDAF revisions. During the validity of the Country Programme, field visits and joint progress reviews will be undertaken with the implementing partners.

60. Emphasis will be placed on monitoring of the 2011 Concluding Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and, within the United Nations system, support will be provided for national monitoring and evaluation efforts in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and other global commitments.

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