

Costa Rica

Executive Summary

Important achievements of the year included:

1. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Education reviewed existing educational provisions and inter-institutional coordination, and identified “Five Dimensions of Exclusion” in the public education system. With new information from the national study, the Ministry designed its new national strategy "Dare to Study," to seek out children and adolescents and support them to return to the classroom. The strategy will be implemented at the start of the new school year in February 2015.
2. To support the Social Assistance Institute (IMAS), UNICEF commissioned and managed an assessment of the country’s Educational Cash Transfer Program, which in recent years benefited some 180,000 socially disadvantaged students per year. The assessment, to be completed in 2015, will identify the required critical improvement across the entire system.
3. Under the leadership of the National Child Welfare Institute (PANI), and under the new Government, the process of building the long-required National Policy on Early Childhood was initiated, thanks in part to the evidence-based advocacy and key bottlenecks identified by a UNICEF-supported Situation Analysis on early childhood development (ECD). An initial draft policy document was undergoing technical and political review at the end of 2014. Further consultation and inter-institutional work will be required to finalise the policy in 2015.

Significant shortfalls faced in 2014 included:

1. The opportunity to readdress a historical vacuum and include explicit objectives and specific actions related to children and adolescents in the National Development Plan did not materialise, despite UNICEF’s repeated advocacy in favour of including national and regional targets. The overall methodology selected by the Government did not allow comprehensive inclusion of cross-sectoral goals. A parallel National Agenda for Children, which sets out and prioritises over-arching and inter-related actions, is the proposed mechanism for ensuring that children’s issues are addressed.
2. Similarly, political and institutional will to complete the National Plan against Violence stalled, as the new Government placed priority on more immediate proposals, such as addressing the rise in child neglect-related accidents, and channelled its energy towards its commitment to address stagnating progress against poverty.

Important collaborative partnerships were strengthened over the year, including:

1. Partnership with the National Institute for Decentralisation (IFAM) and the 32 child-friendly cantons (CAI) were further strengthened to facilitate coordination between public institutions, community development associations, youth groups, the private sector, members of academia and the Church. The role of municipalities was instrumental in ensuring that policies were allocated local funding, thereby providing viability and sustainability to the initiatives.
2. The Joint UN Human Security Fund for the seasonal Ngobe and Buglé indigenous workers, who migrate between Costa Rica and Panama, facilitated multi-institution partnership in two pilot districts, including the critical stakeholders of coffee producers and cooperatives, Government institutions and community organisations.
3. The ‘Tu Voz Vale’ (Your Voice Counts) initiative, which garnered civic youth participation, laid the foundation for a partnership between UNICEF and the nine principal NGOs working on

children's issues. The multi-organisation partnerships reinforced joint advocacy to influence high-level stakeholders. Going forward, the intention is to expand the network of interested stakeholders to include the Government, civil society, the media and the private-sector.

Humanitarian Assistance

There were no humanitarian requirements in Costa Rica in 2014. UNICEF did, however, spearhead a regional project to define new national protocols in all of Central America for emergency preparedness and response related to adults and children with a disability. Likewise, in partnership with the University of Costa Rica, UNICEF began to develop a tsunami-awareness teaching module and video for children.

Equity Case Study

In 2014 the Index of Well-being of Children and Adolescents (IBINA) contributed to nationwide analysis and understanding of equality concerns related to children. This process involved advocacy for the country to develop its own model and methodology for monitoring the wellbeing of children; in particular information that can be disaggregated by geographic area (in this case, by district). The tool was developed by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN) with UNICEF support, based on 2012 census data, and built with their own technical means. IBINA results highlighted geographic disparities, whereby children with higher well-being indicators are mainly located in districts of the Greater Metropolitan Area. This reality has implications for increased migration to urban areas, especially towards the centre of the country. Currently, public institutions working with children, NGOs and local governments use IBINA as a reference tool for their planning and targeting strategies. The index classifies the country's cantons and districts as high, medium, or low well-being from a set of statistical variables. The tool has also proven very useful for UNICEF, identifying districts and cantons with the more significant gaps, permitting the tailoring of advocacy around ensuring that these areas regions are prioritised in programmes and resource allocation. MIDEPLAN is currently developing an index based on administrative records that will yield biannual data, which will require institutions to improve their data collection and quality controls.

The UNICEF-commissioned study "An Approach to the Situation of Children and Adolescents with Disabilities in Costa Rica," stemmed from the need to make disabled adults and children visible in national policy processes. The study captures the situation more clearly, thereby allowing better formulation of programmes and priorities. The National Council for Rehabilitation and Special Education (CNREE) and the Office of the Second Vice President were indispensable allies in this process. The findings revealed that public institutions continue to view disability from a medical/rehabilitation perspective, while the social model of disability has yet to be incorporated. Whilst Costa Rica has public policies that favour children with disabilities, their implementation remains a challenge. The Government used the findings to highlight and motivate institutions to take action, and is currently developing an agenda and plan of action to address some of the critical barriers.

Beginning in 2013 and during 2014 UNICEF Costa Rica, in partnership with the School of Public Health at the University of Costa Rica, developed a "Model of Intervention in Cantons with Higher Rates of Infant Mortality." Based on an analysis of determinants (social, environmental, economic, etc.), the model identifies the most appropriate and relevant public health (prevention, promotion and care) requirements. The model starts at the local level, looking at specific determinants of infant mortality in particular areas and then proposes measures and strategies that are appropriate to that particular context. The first step was to focus on quantitative and qualitative causal analysis. During 2014, work at the local level identified the

determinants and bottlenecks. In 2015, the design and implementation of strategies will begin. By 2017, the model aims to reduce mortality rates in the cantons where infant mortality rates remain high.

Summary Notes and Acronyms

CAI – Child-friendly cantons
C4D - Communication for development
CENCINAI - Nutritional and Educational Centres
CMT - Country Management Team
CPAP- Country Programme Action Plan
CPD - Country Programme Document
CNREE - National Council on Disability
COSECODENI - Social Organisations for the Promotion and Defence of the Rights of Children and Adolescents
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child
DCTs - Direct cash transfers
DNI - Defence for Children International
DGME - National Bureau of Migration and Foreign Affairs
ECD - Early child development
HACT - Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers
HIV - AIDS Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IBINA - Child Wellbeing Indicators Analysis
INA - National Learning Institute
INEC - National Institute of Statistics and Census
ICT - Information and Communications Technology
ICE - Country's Electricity and Telecoms Provider
IBINA - National Children and Adolescents' Well-being Index
MIDEPLAN - Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy
MEP- Ministry of Public Education
MICS4 - Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NDP - National Development Plan
NGOs - Non-Government Organisation
OR- Other resources
PANI- National Child Welfare Institute
PER - Performance Evaluation Report
PBRs - Programme Budget Review
PONADIS - National Policy for Disability
RR - Regular Resources
RO - Regional Office
SENNIAF - National Office for Children, Youth and Family of Panama
SINA - National Information System on Children and Adolescents
SISVI - National Information System on Violence
SINEM - National Music Education System
SitAn - Situation Analysis
SUTEL- National Telecommunications Administration
UCR - University of Costa Rica
UN - United Nations
UNDP - United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Found

Capacity Development

An intermediate step toward strengthening the National Information System on Violence (SISVI) was the redesign of a new digital system to help PANI generate accurate and timely information on domestic violence incidents and follow-up protection measures. Partner institutions working on statistical data collection included information on children and adolescents into their systems.

With UNICEF support, PANI also used last year's evaluation recommendations to develop its new Five-Year Institutional Strategic Plan. Sixty per cent of PANI staff participated in the exercise.

Technical assistance and training to ensure curricular reforms related to elementary, preschool and first grade Spanish language teaching was provided. Also, UNICEF's support to an integrated strategy to stem exclusion included collaboration with the Ministry to adapt, appropriate and complete the "Children out of School" study, thereby strengthening analysis, solutions and community outreach programmes to seek out and reintegrate out-of-school adolescents.

At the local level participation by municipal governments and community organisations in local protection systems across 32 cantons was strengthened. UNICEF estimates that the number of organisations participating in local networks rose from 189 in 2013 to 1,120 in 2014. UNICEF also worked with the municipalities of Pococí and Alajuelita in the development of community-level violence prevention programmes, with a particular focus on issues of masculinity.

Together with Costa Rica's judiciary, a mobile application was designed to grant greater access of adolescents to the juvenile justice system. The mobile app allows users to report situations of sexual violence and drug trafficking. With the collaboration of the national telecommunications administration (SUTEL), all newly purchased mobile phones will come with the app already installed beginning in 2015.

In collaboration with the University of Costa Rica (UCR), a model that informs infant mortality reduction efforts in cantons with higher rates was developed. The model identifies and defines search parameters for causes of mortality and bottlenecks, as well as socio-economic and environmental determinants. The collaboration strengthened the capacity of local institutions and academics to better analyse and address infant mortality.

Through the Joint UN Programme for the Ngäbe and Buglé migrant population, Costa Rica's Nutritional and Educational Centres (CENCINAI) in the southern region and the Ministry of Health built culturally adapted care and stimulation models for indigenous children.

Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

The opportunity to address a historical vacuum by incorporating inclusion-explicit objectives and specific actions related to children and adolescents in the National Development Plan did not materialise, despite UNICEF's repeated advocacy in favour of the inclusion of national and regional targets. The overall methodology selected by the Government did not allow comprehensive inclusion of cross-sectoral goals. A parallel National Agenda for Children, which sets out and prioritises over-arching and inter-related actions, seeks to ensure that children's concerns are addressed.

UNICEF's support for two specific analyses provided critical inputs for the new Government's priorities. The first, "An approximation of the situation of children and adolescents with disabilities" (http://www.unicef.org/costarica/20140801_discapacidad_cr.pdf), was the primary input related to children in the Action Plan for the National Policy for Disability (PONADIS). The second, "An approximation of the situation of early childhood development in Costa Rica", formed an integral part of the process of dialogue and advocacy for the promotion and development of a National Policy on Early Childhood.

The Child Wellbeing Indicators Analysis supported by UNICEF in 2013 became a useful tool for Government agencies, NGOs and municipalities, allowing decision-makers to identify cantons and districts with the lowest indicators and prioritise institutional efforts in their favour. IBINA also became an advocacy tool for addressing regional disparities. The analysis was introduced as a good practice during the International Policy Forum on Welfare and Development held in Mexico in November. (<http://forobienestar.jalisco.mx/es/programa-foro-internacional-bienestar-y-politicas-publicas>)

MIDEPLAN, the National Statistics and Census Institute, PANI and UNICEF signed an institutional agreement and developed a strategy for the conceptual framework and implementation of a National Information System on Children and Adolescents (SINA). The system would integrate all information at the national level with the aim of improving the design, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, as well as the country's compliance with international commitments.

Research commissioned for the first MICS-4 generated further analysis of the situation of children and women in Costa Rica by senior researchers, which was then widely disseminated. (http://www.unicef.org/costarica/media_28336.htm)

Partnerships

UNICEF continued to strengthen its partnerships with Government, NGOs, the private sector and youth organisations in 2014. The framework of the 'Tu Voz Vale' (Your Voice Counts) initiative, which built youth civic participation, fostered a partnership between UNICEF and the nine principal NGOs working on child-related issues, namely: the Red Cross Youth Section, Boy Scouts, the NGO consortium COSECODENI, Defence for Children International (DNI), World Vision Foundation, Parque La Libertad, Paniamor Foundation, the Youth Action Foundation and TED-X Youth. The partnerships will seek to continue to influence policy: concretely by presenting the findings of 9,000 surveys to the President, but also by expanding the network of interested stakeholders to include the Government, civil society, the media and the private-sector.

In relation to the private-sector, more than 85 companies were introduced to global Business Principles and Children's Rights as a result of ongoing and strengthened multi-party partnership with the Association of Businesses for Development, Save the Children, the Paniamor Foundation, Costa Rica's Electricity and Telecoms Provider (ICE) and Etipres.

A new music for development programme (Musica para la Niñez), targeting the most disadvantaged young children across the country, instigated a new partnership with the Ministry of Culture, National Music Education System (SINEM), the Ministry of Health and CENCINAI. Fundraising for these activities allowed

UNICEF to deepen its private sector fundraising with ICE and branch out to new companies, such as Special Ticket. Artists, business people, journalists and social scientists all agreed to be spokespersons for the music programme.

The 'Child-Friendly Cantons' initiative continued to strengthen UNICEF's relationships with 32 cantonal governments and the Ministry of Decentralisation, facilitating coordination between public institutions, community development associations, youth groups, the private sector, members of academia and the Church. The role of municipalities was instrumental in ensuring that policies were locally funded, providing greater viability and sustainability to the initiatives.

The Joint UN Human Security Fund project for the seasonal Ngobe and Buglé indigenous workers who migrate between Costa Rica and Panama created yet another opportunity to reinforce UN coordination and synergies as well as district-level multi-institution partnerships. Critical stakeholders included coffee producers, Government institutions and community organisations.

External Communication and Public Advocacy

UNICEF's ongoing advocacy with the Government related to children and equity will in part come to fruition in 2015 when the country formulates a National Plan for Children and Adolescents. Similarly, wide dissemination of the SitAn on Children with Disabilities, brought this much-neglected topic to the forefront of the public agenda. Persons with disabilities were also given higher priority in terms of emergency preparedness and response, following related advocacy by UNICEF in 2013. Further, publication of the SitAn on ECD enabled PANI to resume working on a policy for early childhood.

UNICEF's social media followers tripled (from 0.3 K to 5.2 K on average, with engagement reaching 2K). An integral part of this growth was a strategy to support youth participation both online and off. Initiatives to promote active youth participation in the design of policies and programmes included:

1. The 'Tu Voz Vale', initiative, which allowed teenagers to voice their concern about the future of the country, reached more than 9,000 youth
2. The launch of 10 Cantonal-level youth networks
3. A mapping of groups and organisations comprised of children and adolescents, characterising their main experiences with social participation, including scope and limitations faced. In 2015, a strategy that addresses the lessons learned through this process will be developed.

Implementation of the global "End Violence" campaign focused on:

1. Inclusion of the topic of violence-prevention on municipal agendas
2. A baseline related to perceptions of violence
3. Implementation of a C4D strategy for violence-prevention, focused on issues of masculinity and gender awareness, in two cantons
4. A training kit for trainers and all the materials for a 2015 campaign

The commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the CRC provided an opportunity to mobilise attention and forge new partnerships around issues related to innovation, equality and education. Accomplishments included:

1. An 'Activate Talk' bringing international speakers to infuse new ideas and dialogue in discussions about education and equality

2. A feasibility study for the establishment of an innovation lab in Costa Rica
3. A symposium on MICS-4.

South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation

UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy to produce a “Catalogue of systematised good practices related to children and adolescents.” The catalogue documents programmes, experiences and initiatives, while also providing key information for possible technical cooperation and training. The catalogue, which will be developed into an online exchange platform in 2015, will assist Costa Rica’s ministries, Government agencies, independent institutions, academia, civil society groups and the private sector to position themselves as added-value partners for South-South cooperation. In 2015 two pilot South-South cooperation projects will be initiated, to test the online platform and the quality of the catalogue and technical exchange.

UNICEF Costa Rica facilitated a knowledge-sharing exchange between PANI and the Ministry of Social Welfare of Panama. Whilst the visit covered a series of protection-related issues, particular focus was given to highlighting the impact of institutionalisation of children. In Costa Rica, the System of Prevention and Temporary Shelter for Children and Adolescents who are separated from their families is currently being developed, with new practices being actively sought out. The two countries agreed to continue to share experiences and to a future meeting in Panama, which will include meeting with PANI’s counterpart agency (SENNIAF) and further exchanges of good practices for a national system of integrated protection. Costa Rica’s system is under review, whilst Panama is initiating a debate on the importance of creating such a system.

UNICEF offices in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, under the framework of multi-country project for the prevention of armed violence, promoted a bilateral meeting of police departments. Risk factors underpinning the minors joining gangs and weapons-use were key issues discussed, and Nicaragua’s significant experience in organising youth populations was highlighted.

Identification Promotion of Innovation

In support of continued efforts by the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education and reduce the gap in terms of access to information, particularly online, UNICEF financed and supported the development of a mobile application. This application has increased access for both students and teachers to online learning material, specifically the Teacher-at-Home digital video programme. The free application runs on both iOS and Android-based smartphones, and the content is accessible online and interfaces with leading social networks. During 2014 this app was used by more than 8,000 users.

In conjunction with the Supreme Court, a new mobile application was under development to promote access to justice for youth. The app, in its first iteration, focuses on four key issues: sexual violence, drug trafficking, protection measures and bullying. In 2015, through an agreement with SUTEL, this app will be installed on all new mobile phones sold in the country.

UNICEF Costa Rica capitalised on the global initiative and hosted an Activate Talk on the issue of innovation in learning and education, bringing international speakers from Europe and the Region. A key outcome of the event was an invitation to Costa Rica’s Minister of Education to participate in an ongoing initiative led by the UK-based Innovations Unit for high-level education system authorities.

Maintaining the momentum on innovations, UNICEF also commissioned a feasibility study on the potential value-added for the organisation in helping to set up an Innovation Lab. The findings will be available in the first quarter of 2015.

Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

Particular emphasis was given to emphasising the rights of disabled children, indigenous minorities, migrants and indigenous women. UNICEF supported the new Government on matters related to the country's international human rights commitments, as well as the analysis, monitoring progress and pending enactment of national legislation. Together with the consortium of NGOs COSECODENI, intensive advocacy undertaken at the Congressional, Presidential and Supreme Court levels led to the approval and ratification of the Third Optional Protocol to the CRC (on communications procedures). Costa Rica became the tenth country in the world to ratify the Protocol, thereby bringing it into force.

Together with the National Council on Disability (CNREE), a situation analysis was developed with broad participation of all social sectors, identifying the principle bottlenecks and challenges in realising the rights of the disabled. The study was presented nationally by the Vice President for social affairs, who committed the Government to following the SitAn's recommendations and to include issues related to children in the National Disability Policy Action Plan.

To highlight the ongoing challenge of following-up the observations of the CRC Committee to Costa Rica, UNICEF supported DNI, the Ombudsman and PANI workshops to analyse the 17 observations to the CRC.

Two UN inter-agency projects sought to strengthen and address the rights of indigenous migrant workers and indigenous women. Within the framework of the UN Human Security Fund, UNICEF developed a culturally sensitive model of ECD care, including child centres at coffee plantations for children between two and nine years of age. Indigenous women in turn requested UNICEF to mediate with PANI to identify culturally relevant child protection measures.

Finally, in cooperation with the Civil Registry and UNHCR, means were provided to search for all outstanding individuals (adults and children) missing from national registries.

Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

1. Changing perceptions of men and women about domestic violence against children

- Objective is to analyse men and women's behavioural patterns to combat domestic violence. Activities undertaken generated a statistical baseline that served to identify culturally ingrained tendencies, myths, and beliefs that contribute to perpetuating violence against children within the family. Study results informed training and communication activities.

- Coordination: Activities were undertaken in Pococí and Alajuelita cantons and local networks against intra-family violence. These networks lead and coordinate all interventions.

- Annual budget: US \$100,000

- Number of staff involved: 3

- Period: 12 months

- Results: A model for communication and intervention to change violent attitudes embedded in gender-based cultural roles.

2. The creation of UNICEF's strategy for the promotion of adolescent participation in Costa Rica

- Objective: Incorporate the perception of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 years in the formulation of a UNICEF-supported strategy to promote adolescent development.
- Coordination and leadership: Activities were carried out in coordination with municipal authorities of 10 different Costa Rican cities
- Annual budget: US\$30,000 (estimated)
- Number of staff involved: 2
- Period: 6 months
- Results: UNICEF strategy, defined with adolescents' participation

Environmental Sustainability

UNICEF did not undertake any initiatives related to environmental sustainability in 2014.

Effective Leadership

UNICEF Costa Rica underwent an audit in late 2014; recommendations are expected in February. In preparation for the audit, UNICEF undertook a self-evaluation, with the assistance of a series of reference checklists provided by the Regional Office. Subsequently, the Country Management Team (CMT) made a number of recommendations for improved practices and management oversight to address the self-identified weaknesses. For instance, adherence to deadlines for performance reviews has proven to be a challenge, and the CMT recommended increased measures to ensure compliance.

While completing two micro-assessments and commissioning a macro-assessment, UNICEF also elaborated a detailed plan for how they will strengthen HACT implementation in 2015. Plan implementation will be monitored by the CMT.

Likewise, weaknesses identified during a mini-business continuity test (related to Satellite phones and Begans) undertaken during the visit of the Regional Operations Advisor were addressed. UNICEF Costa Rica updated its Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) plan, and also reviewed its emergency risks by participating in a national-level simulation with the Government and updating its early-warning/early-action profile.

Financial Resources Management

Management indicators were monitored on a monthly basis by the CMT. This included review of the budget, close follow-up of expenditure rates for expiring grants and discussions on reallocations of contributions across outputs according to changing priorities.

Utilisation rates for 2014 were: 95 per cent for RR and 86 per cent for OR. As a member of the Panama hub, UNICEF Costa Rica's bank reconciliations are completed by the hub.

UNICEF Costa Rica achieved a 25 per cent cost savings for rent, as part of a joint renegotiation with UNDP, UNFPA and the landlord.

Cash assistance liquidations complied with required timeframes, and UNICEF maintained 0 per cent of outstanding DCT over nine months.

UNICEF issued a contract for a HACT macro-assessment, which will be completed by February 2015. Two micro-assessments were completed as well as a HACT plan that seeks to address the weaknesses and monitor improvements. The HACT plan is to be monitored by the CMT.

Fund-raising and Donor Relations

UNICEF launched a fundraising campaign for its Music for Development programme targeting individual donors, in partnership with ICE, the local telecommunications company. Although SMS donation market options are still very limited (no real outreach data can be provided by ICE in terms demographics of market segments reached), the effort has improved civil society's awareness and served to position UNICEF. Lessons learned include not to rely exclusively on individual donors as a source of funds, given that the market remains underdeveloped. An alternative is greater investment in additional media channels and publicity to complement social media efforts to reach key audiences, including corporate donors. Corporate donor outreach will be a priority in early 2015.

Evaluation

No evaluations were completed in 2014. Nevertheless, in meetings and dialogues with the new Government to promote stronger measurement of results, an evaluation of one of the country's most significant conditional cash transfer programs "Avancemos" was agreed and initiated. The programme's effectiveness in promoting the retention and reintegration of disadvantaged adolescents (12-to-20 years of age) into the secondary education system is to be assessed in early 2015.

Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

Cost saving and efficiency gain achieved in 2014 included:

- 25 per cent reduction in rent costs for the same premises, due to a renegotiation of the contract with the landlord
- 57 per cent cost savings on the purchase of new vehicle as a result of a trade-in negotiation on old vehicle with the supplier
- Due to a restructuring because of joining the Panama hub and foreseeing an 'ICT Light' infrastructure, staff costs charged to BMA (post) declined. PBR-approved and implemented net changes were the abolition of one position and the downgrading of the Operations Assistant post to a lower grade-level. In accordance with the 2013 PBR, this represented a 13 per cent reduction for the current programme cycle.

Supply Management

The total amount of supplies for 2014 was US\$946,495.00, which included:

- Programme (3 PO) US\$8,732.00
- Operations (9 PO) US\$34,250.00
- Services (79 PO) US\$903,513

UNICEF Costa Rica does not have a warehouse.

Security for Staff and Premises

No additional or new security measures were implemented in 2014. UNICEF and the UNCT were able to test the telephone security tree with the help of the inter-agency local security focal point during a simulation exercise with the Government in September.

Human Resources

In 2014 UNICEF Costa Rica joined the Panama hub and took the necessary staffing measures to transition to an ICT Light infrastructure. With the help of the Regional Office and the Hub, the transition was relatively smooth.

The CMT also completed a review of all assistants, to better rationalise the work and delegate administrative and financial tasks. In addition, a HACT Plan that outlines staff responsibilities in this key area was completed. In line with requirements, PER revisions and feedback were completed twice during the year. A more rigorous process of truly rating performance, areas for improvements as well as strengths, continues to be sought. Likewise, ensuring that all staff comply with deadlines will be monitored closely in 2015.

Given that the last staff survey was completed in 2011 and that since then UNICEF has gone through some important structural changes, a decision was made to wait for the new Global Staff Survey to better understand staff concerns and elaborate a response plan. In the meantime, UNICEF completed a three-day stress reduction workshop, financed by the Regional Office, and a two-day fundraising workshop during 2014.

All new staff and consultants completed the UN Cares training developed by the inter-agency HIV/AIDS group.

With approval from a Programme Budget Review mail poll, UNICEF Costa Rica used RR funds to cover the partial cost (six months) of two OR-financed positions, in order to temporarily bridge the OR funding gap. The change represented 5 per cent of total RR expenses.

UNICEF participated in a Government and UN joint EPR simulation, which strengthened emergency response capacities.

Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

UNICEF provided seed funding for, and been an active partner in the development of, two mobile applications. The first was the Ministry of Education App that had approximately 28,000 users in 2014. The second was a mobile app to increase access by adolescents to the national justice system.

Programme Components from RAM

ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

OUTCOME 1 By 2017, children will have greater access to pertinent and quality education and integrated early childhood development care leading to a reduction of social disparities and inequalities.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The major challenges of the Costa Rican education system were the subject of much debate during the 2014 election campaign. A principal objective was to advocate with the new administration to ensure continuity and strengthen ongoing reforms and the priority strategy of stemming exclusion and drop-out. Unfortunately, educational authorities began their mandate with a four-week-long nationwide teacher's strike. Once the administration was able to return to its core functions, UNICEF reached an agreement with the new authorities on a four-year

agenda focused on the two priorities of out-of-school children and adolescents and improving the quality of education.

Educational Reforms

An important achievement was the approval of the Early Childhood Curriculum reform, which sets out a more holistic vision of child development and seeks to make the transition from preschool education into the first year of Basic General Education smoother and more coherent, given the 11 per cent repetition rates for first grade students. Preliminary work was completed in 2014; further training for teachers and information for parents will take place in 2015.

With UNICEF's financial and technical support, 16,631 teachers from the 27 educational regions were trained to implement the reforms within the Spanish programme of study, for the first cycle. In 2015, training processes and development of learning environments will be strengthened.

School Exclusion

UNICEF initiated a national study on the Five Dimensions of Exclusion in the public education system, using a methodology based on the UNESCO/UNICEF global "Out-of-School Initiative."

Simultaneously, and incorporating the initial results from the Out-of-School study, a national strategy "Dare to Study" was launched, aimed at bringing children and adolescents back into the classroom. The strategy combines a review of existing educational provisions, inter-institutional coordination, individually seeking out students who abandoned school and a media campaign. Implementation will begin in January for the new school year starting in February.

Violence in School

Although the programme 'Convivir' (Peaceful Co-Existence) has reached more than 70 per cent of schools nationally, weaknesses remain with regard to addressing the many different forms of violence and truly understanding their impact. The programme and process were being reviewed in 2014, with active involvement by teachers and school principals and the expectation of a new programme proposal for the first quarter of 2015.

Education Assessments

Upon the request of IMAS, UNICEF developed and completed an assessment of the *Avancemos* Cash Transfer Programme, which in recent years has benefited 180,000 socially disadvantaged students per year. The evaluation will be completed by mid-2015.

ECD SitAn and National Policy

In partnership with NGOs and Government institutions, UNICEF carried out an inter-sectoral SitAn in ECD, to better understand bottlenecks and possible solutions. The study reaffirmed the lack of national leadership and integration across sectors. Early childhood and the particular needs of this age-group remain largely invisible in both policies and programmes. The SitAn is serving as an advocacy tool with the new administration, in that it supports the elaboration of a national inter-sectoral policy and comprehensive childcare system.

Under the leadership of PANI, with a new Government in place, the process of building a national policy on early childhood was initiated. A first draft policy document was completed and reviewed both at the technical and political level during 2014, and the policy is expected to be finalised in 2015.

UNICEF continues to work on scaling-up programmes promoting healthy, child-friendly family and parenting practices among the most vulnerable and in response to specific childcare

services needed for indigenous migrants.

OUTPUT 1 By 2017, an enhanced education system resulted in an increased number of children and adolescents living in regions with the greatest social/education inequities that complete primary and secondary within the standard timeframes.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The Preschool Curriculum Reform, which aims to develop the full potential and interests of children through a comprehensive educational approach, was adopted in 2014. To address the 11 per cent first grade repetition rate, the reform provides a new logical sequence to learning and skills needed for transitioning to the first grade. The reform will impact approximately 98,255 students enrolled in preschool and in the transition cycle, and impact 5,019 teachers, who will require training. A practical guide for the design and implementation of the reform was developed.

With UNICEF support, 16,631 teachers from all 27 educational regions were trained in the implementation of changes to the Spanish First Cycle programme. Support materials and monitoring processes were being established for 2015.

In 2014, some 80 per cent of teachers were trained in the fine arts, music and physical education in support of the new primary school curriculum, approved in late 2013 under the framework of the Ethics, Aesthetics and Citizenship programme.

Financed and developed in cooperation with UNICEF, in February 2014, the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) launched a mobile app as part of its efforts to increase access to educational resources and support the learning process. The app includes educational videos, practical exercises and sample assessment tests. The mobile app will undergo a second round of improvements in 2015, in terms of scope, development of support materials and content.

UNICEF initiated a national study on the “Five Dimensions of Exclusion” in the public education system. The methodology is based on the UNESCO/UNICEF global “Out-of-School Initiative” and seeks to identify the profiles of excluded children and the barriers and bottlenecks to clarify the dynamics and causal processes related to the five dimensions of exclusion. The study will review policies and strategies for addressing barriers and bottlenecks related to the five dimensions of exclusion in education and beyond (with a focus on social protection systems).

UNICEF Costa Rica carried out advocacy for approval of a review and proposed strengthening of the Convivir Programme. Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the programme and related performance indicators were under development to address shortcomings of the original programme design. Similarly, the four protocols related to weapons, bullying, drugs and sexual abuse were being reviewed.

Technical support was provided to assess the country’s largest conditional cash transfer programme (Avancemos) and identify the necessary steps to optimise all facets of the programme, including: identification of beneficiaries, allocation of resources, tracking and monitoring of beneficiaries’ socioeconomic conditions, coordination with the MEP to ensure beneficiaries’ educational retention and assessment of the impact on drop-out rates through evaluation and a proposed plan for improvements.

OUTPUT 2 By 2017 in regions of greatest social exclusion, a targeted integrated early childhood development policy is applied, implemented by the relevant government agencies granting access to child care services for the most vulnerable children ages 0-7

Analytical Statement of Progress:

During the first semester UNICEF, in cooperation with public institutions and civil society, completed a Situation Analysis of ECD. The SitAn pointed to fragmentation of ECD services and the lack of clear leadership in this regard. In line with the findings and recommendations, priorities and actions were being defined with key public institutions and decision-makers of the new Government.

Under PANI leadership the process of building a National Policy on Early Childhood was initiated. A first draft policy document was being reviewed, both at the technical and political level, at the end of 2014. Further consultation and inter-institutional work will be required to finalise the policy in 2015.

In response to the insufficient coverage of and alternatives for ECD programmes – and in cooperation with MoH, Fundación Paniamor and private sector partners – UNICEF began in 2014 to scale-up recently designed programmes (such as ‘Somos Familia’) that seek to utilise alternative approaches with families and communities. Some 216 trainers from the national CENCINAI programme, and 1,000 families received training as formal mediators and casual mediators. The programme will be consolidated and a monitoring programme developed in 2015

As part of an inter-agency UN Human Security Fund Joint Programme aimed at indigenous migrants, a culturally appropriate model for integrated child care services was designed. The model was piloted with 200 indigenous children from two-to-nine years of age who remain in Costa Rica for six months a year, and required the cooperation of coffee farmers, municipalities and four national institutions.

To address regional disparities in child mortality rates applying the Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES), UNICEF continued to work with the University of Costa Rica on a study of the causes of under-five mortality (related to socio-economic and environmental factors as well as quality of life and access to health care). The study will identify strategies to introduce adequate care in the five most affected cantons.

OUTCOME 2 By 2017, the capacity of the child protection system is increased to implement innovative strategies to prevent and protect children against the various forms of violence within the schools, families and the community

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In terms of strengthening local protective systems, all 32 CAI earmarked and allocated funds to existing or new municipal policies. Likewise, the participation of adolescents increased and inter-institutional coordination networks were either established or reinforced. At the national level, the agenda for children was positioned within IFAM, with policies, regulations and budgets established for protecting children’s rights at the municipal level.

Important institutional allies, such as INAMU, joined violence-prevention efforts by reinforcing their commitment to strengthening local networks for victims of domestic violence.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Security, Supreme Court, and

academia (UNED and UCR) studies and fora contributed to a better understanding of the factors that increase the risk of violence against children and adolescents at the community level, in schools, and in families.

Studies produced new evidence, conceptual baselines and statistics, to help build working models aimed at changing perceptions and adults' violent attitudes towards children. Men and young males in schools were a particular focus. Work with the Supreme Court resulted in the development of a mobile application that allows children and adolescents to be informed, seek protection and report different crimes.

Political and institutional will to continue the elaboration of a National Plan against Violence came to an end, as the new Government focused on implementing other models and more immediate proposals related to poverty reduction.

UNICEF continued to provide significant support to PANI, as the lead institution for child protection:

- Ongoing financial and technical assistance for the institutional Strategic 5-year Plan (2014-2020)
- Ongoing technical support and advocacy for the de-institutionalisation of children, an effort initiated in 2013
- Technical and financial support to produce an improved internal reporting system (INFOPANI)
- Initiated a review of the educational modules for the Parenting Academy, which seeks to increase learning among parents, caretakers and adolescents
- Support for establishing coordination and negotiation mechanisms with civil society, to strengthen advocacy for indigenous and migrant children.

Advocacy within the National Council for Children and Adolescents (inter-institutional ministerial-level body) resulted in a request for a proposal to reform the National Protection System.

OUTPUT 1 By 2017, 20 cantons with the lowest welfare indicators have improved protection services against the different forms of violence for children and adolescents, in the family, the community and the school.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

An ongoing strategy of advocacy and training to 32 of Costa Rica's 81 cantons (40 per cent) municipalities on child rights-related concerns (within the Child-Friendly Cantons Framework) achieved:

- Just over 50 per cent of the municipalities transformed their 2013 action plans into municipal policies with permanently allocated budgets (18 municipalities). Twelve more municipalities are in the process of following suit.
- In 2014 municipal investment in children and adolescents increased by approximately US\$ 450,000.
- Increased participation of youth in leadership and civic education processes
- 2013 participatory models and initiatives related to culture, art, recreation and sports were extended to the 32 child-friendly cantons in 2014

- The municipalities of 32 cantons joined the PANI-supported local protection networks (SLP); about 100 new organisations were incorporated into these networks.

Of the 32 cantons, 12 have the lowest rates of child welfare and seven are among the most violent in the country. To improve the protective environment and increase violence prevention, the following models and innovations were rolled out:

- A survey was undertaken with the National Institute for Statistics, and a follow-on pilot project in two municipalities sought to socialise young men against inter-family violent behaviour
- A “School without Weapons” programme was introduced, including a tool-kit, and training within the academic curriculum to deter the presence of guns in schools
- Support was provided for “Casas de la Alegría” (Houses of Joy or Jamigara Judö Jüe), which provide a protective and stimulating environment for indigenous children living on coffee farms.
- A mobile app was developed to increase youth access to protection by judicial services: “Empower Yourself, Justice Protects You”. The app offers teens the opportunity to learn about their rights, how to protect themselves and to report crimes related to sexual violence. In 2015, this app will be further developed to address other crimes, such as drug trafficking and bullying.

OUTPUT 2 By 2017 the National Integrated Child Protection System has an established mechanism to monitor and evaluate its performance and results.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In 2014, UNICEF supported the following initiatives and results:

- Technical assistance for development of PANI’s 2015-2020 Institutional Strategic Plan
- PANI's informational system strengthened and integrated into the National Violence Information System (SISVI)
- Joint advocacy with PANI, the Ombudsman and MIDEPLAN resulted in the National Council for Children and Adolescents request for a proposal to reform the National Protection System for September 2015
- As a result of advocacy and dialogue initiated in 2013, during 2014 PANI included concerns related to de-institutionalisation within its newly created protection area. PANI sought to reduce the time spent in institutions, with a commitment to diversifying its community approach models, while respecting the rights of boys and girls to live with a family.

OUTCOME 3 By 2017, increased national and local capacities to systematically monitor and generate quality information, ensure that disadvantaged children and adolescents are prioritised by social policies and programmes.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In light of the new Government elected in 2014 – as well as the need to address a historical vacuum in the National Development Plan (NDP) in relation to explicit objectives and specific actions for children and adolescents – a process of advocacy and dialogue was undertaken to include them in national and regional targets in the NDP 2015-2018. The methodology selected by the Government for the NDP did not allow for comprehensive inclusion of the goals and

actions for children. But as a result of ongoing dialogue, agreement was reached for the formulation of an "Agenda for Children and Adolescents" in early 2015. The agenda should allow the current administration to prioritise comprehensive, inter-related actions.

OUTPUT 1 By 2017, the Children and Adolescents' Information System (SINA) generates information that informs policy makers for the formulation and revisions of legislations, public policies and programs targeted at reducing inequities.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In partnership with the Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP) an "Observatory of Public Policy Management related to Children and Adolescents" was designed. The observatory is to promote active and ongoing dialogue on the bottlenecks, obstacles and challenges that the country faces to effectively address the integrated development of children and adolescents, as well as to propose courses of action and provide concrete solutions. Strong participation from the social sectors, academia, civil society, Government officials and the private sector is expected for the Observatory, which will also provide space for meaningful youth participation.

OUTPUT 2 By 2017, Costa Rican social sectors and civil society organisations have increased capacity to monitor equity-based results and undertake evidence-based advocacy.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF updated a 1994 mapping of all child-related civil society groups and their mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the situation of children and adolescents. Complementing this mapping of civil society organisations, UNICEF also commissioned a mapping of all youth-led associations/initiatives (where children and adolescents are the principal actors in advocating for change in their communities).

UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Culture and Youth's (MCJ) Young Persons Observatory (OPJ) to explore opportunities for improving existing tools and creating a monitoring network. Using the latter's institutional online platform, the network will be accessible to all those interested, including children and adolescents.

As a result of continuous follow-up by the Consortium of Civil Society Organisations, Costa Rica became the 10th country globally to ratify the 3rd Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thereby paving the way for the historic entry into force of the Protocol on the 14th of April 2014.

UNICEF partnered with 10 of the largest youth-focused NGOs to promote greater child participation. It is hoped that the a survey of young people's perceptions about national priorities in the coming years will serve as an initial entry point for greater engagement with youth on the part of all concerned organisations. The survey results will be presented to major political candidates in the electoral period.

In conjunction with the University of Costa Rica, UNICEF conducted "Youth Week: Young People Researching Youth", during which teenagers and adolescents were provided with various opportunities for reflecting on issues such as disability, sexuality and the exercise of their rights.

OUTCOME 4 By 2017, the program of cooperation will have incorporated a gender perspective, communications for development and preparedness and response for children and adolescents in emergencies.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Costa Rica lacked the knowledge and information to design a C4D strategy in 2013. Emphasis was placed on building internal capacity; the communication section received extensive external training during 2014. In the coming year, priority will be placed on designing and delivering two C4D strategies, one on violence and the other on ECD. Likewise, UNICEF will invest in building staff and counterpart knowledge and skills.

New partnerships with both the National Rehabilitation Commission and the National Emergency Commission initiated a process of generating further evidence and joint advocacy for children with disabilities. In particular, the objective was to ensure the presence of specific mention of children with a disability in the National Policy Action Plan for persons with disabilities. The idea is to mainstream disability, specifically children with a disability, into regional emergency preparedness and response guidelines. An action plan is to be developed to build capacity at the institutional and local level, as well as to encourage greater involvement by people with disabilities in municipal governance structures.

A long-term partnership was established with the National Emergency Commission (CNE) and the UCR to design and implement a strategy to promote disaster preparedness in communities and schools in areas highly vulnerable to tsunamis or other disasters.

OUTPUT 1 By 2017, the programme will contribute with integration initiatives and programmatic coordination to raise awareness about populations that have been excluded and promote changes in behaviour and knowledge.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

In the early years of the Country Programme focus was placed on generating critical information related to excluded and marginalised populations. Two situation analyses are in the process of being completed, one related to children and disabilities and the second to early child development and care. A baseline for intra-family violence is also under development.

OUTCOME 5 Effective and efficient governance and systems to manage risks and achieve programme results.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

The Annual Management Plan set out the priorities and indicators related to the Country Programme, office management and performance. Progress was monitored by the CMT through the Manager's Dashboard to identify weaknesses and implement corrective measures.

Operations took on implementation of actions and measures for effective and efficient use of resources and management of support.

OUTPUT 1 Effective and efficient governance and systems to manage risks and achieve programme results.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Costa Rica updated its risk and control self-assessment.

The CMT monitored indicators to ensure alignment with global standards for management and quality assurance.

All statutory committees were established promptly and functioned according to UNICEF rules and regulations. Their composition was reviewed during preparation of the Annual Management Plan.

Effective technical support and maintenance of ICT infrastructure ensured full connectivity with all systems during the year. A reliable and stable connectivity to headquarters contributed to the proper implementation of VISION.

OUTPUT 2 Effective and efficient management and stewardship of financial resources related to office administration.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Costa Rica monitored and tracked the budget and results on a weekly basis, which led to the creation of a model for monitoring progress, identifying challenges and making decisions. Consequently all target measures of effective financial management were met.

Measures adopted included:

- 1) Weekly budget monitoring in all work areas and dashboard indicators
- 2) Liquidation of all funds by counterparts according to HACT standards; a HACT plan was developed and implemented
- 3) Reduction of 25 per cent in rental costs was agreed with UNFPA, UNDP and the landlord
- 4) UNICEF Costa Rica made a smooth transition to the Panama Hub
- 5) In November 2014 UNICEF Costa Rica began an audit review, to be completed in February 2015.

OUTPUT 3 Effective and efficient management of Human capacity including staff development and learning and staff well-being.

Analytical Statement of Progress:

UNICEF Costa Rica managed to reduce its staff, using management coordination and the annual training and development plan, covering both staff and organisational learning opportunities.

All staff members completed the required performance evaluation steps on time.

In 2014, UNICEF Costa Rica joined the Panamá Hub.

UNICEF has an updated Business Continuity Plan and staff are aware of their responsibilities.

UNICEF has a designated Peer Support team. Staff members were trained and worked on

topics such as stress management and fundraising. All staff have access to counselling resources as well as support from the staff association and HR.

Document Center

Evaluation

Title	Sequence Number	Type of Report
"Situation Analysis of Early Childhood in Costa Rica: An approach to Fulfilling the Rights of Children during Early Childhood."	2014/003	SitAn
"Index of Well-being of Children and Adolescents"	2014/002	Study
"An approach to the situation of children and adolescents with disabilities in Costa Rica"	2014/001	SitAn

Other Publication

Title
Situation Analysis of Early Childhood in Costa Rica: An approach to Fulfilling the Rights of Children during Early Childhood
An approach to the situation of children and adolescents with disabilities in Costa Rica
Index of Well-being of Children and Adolescents
Early Child Development kit for Ngäbe Buglé children (guide, worksheets, activity planner, posters, puzzles, lottery, flipcharts, storybooks)
Domestic Violence Prevention Kit: Facilitation Guide, flip charts, dividers and cards
Spanish Language's Course Programme and Anthology for the 2nd Cycle of the General Basic Education
Sulá ERD Curricular Proposal: Life's projects and organisational structure of the mesh and pedagogical core
Joint Action Protocol for the Attention of Children and Adolescent Foreign Students by officials of DGME, INA and PANI
Costa Rica: Educational and Contextual Indicators
Corporal Punishment in Childhood

Lessons Learned

Document Type/Category	Title
Lesson Learned	Tu Voz Vale (Your Voice Counts)