

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Country programme document 2009-2013

The draft country programme document for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (E/ICEF/2008/P/L.24) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its 2008 second regular session (15-18 September 2008).

The document was subsequently revised, and this final version was approved at the 2009 first regular session of the Executive Board on 5 February 2009.

Basic data[†]
(2006 unless otherwise stated)

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	10.1
U5MR (per 1,000 live births)	21
Underweight (% , moderate and severe)	5
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 1998-2005)*	60
Primary school attendance (% net, male/female)	91/92
Primary school children reaching grade 5 (%)	91
Use of improved drinking water sources (% , 2004)	83
Use of improved sanitation facilities (% , 2004)	68
Adult HIV prevalence rate (% , 2005)	0.7
Child work (% , children 5 to 14 years old)	8
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 070
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3 (%)	71
One-year-olds immunized against measles (%)	55

[†] More comprehensive country data on children and women are available at <http://www.unicef.org/>.

* This figure is a 2005 estimate of WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, which is adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths.

The situation of children and women

1. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has 27 million inhabitants of whom 10 million, or 37 per cent, are children and adolescents. Indigenous peoples, who make up just over 2 per cent of the population, are found in all areas of the country. No accurate population statistics exist for another important group, Afro-descendants. Venezuela is highly urbanized: over 88 per cent of the population lives in urban areas, with 40 per cent concentrated in just five cities.

2. Since 1999, when the current Government took office, the country has undergone a process of widespread structural change, which has led to some periods of social tension. This process has included the nationalization of the hydrocarbon, energy and telecommunications industry. The Government has declared its commitment to increasing citizen participation in order to achieve democratic and social rights and justice. Pro-poor policies, reduction of disparities and social mobilization are the hallmarks of government policy. Since 2003, the social policy of Venezuela has been diversified. *Misiones sociales* (“social missions”), an initiative of the Government, form an alternative public management destined to the most excluded populations, especially targeting primary health care, alphabetization, adult education and food distribution. Another positive development is that the second National Plan of Economic and Social Development 2008-2013 includes a component for integral care for children.

3. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has the fourth-largest economy in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in recent years has experienced the highest rate of growth of gross national product (GNP) in the region. In 2007, GNP grew by 8.4 per cent. Three key factors have contributed to the country’s economic growth:

high oil prices, high consumption levels in the internal market, and significant levels of public expenditure, including social investment. Although the exchange rate for the bolivar has stayed at 2.15 per United States dollar since 2003, domestic inflation has continued at higher than 22 per cent. The currency was reconverted in 2008.

4. Social investment grew from 11.2 per cent to 13.6 per cent of GNP between 2002 and 2006. However, this growth has not been reflected in increased investment in key sectors for children: since 2001, public investment in education and health has remained constant at 5 per cent of GNP for education, and 2 per cent for health. It should be noted that the investment channelled through the *Misiones Sociales* is not included in the official figures.

5. The country is playing a major international role in promoting partnerships for development, including through regional integration and South-South cooperation, in order to strengthen the geo-political position of Latin America and the Caribbean. South-South exchange has been most significant in education, health, agro-industry, telecommunications, and oil and other energy sources.

6. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was incorporated into the Constitution in 1999, and a new and expanded legal framework was created for the protection of the rights of children, adolescents and women. The Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, or (Ley Orgánica para la Protección del Niño y del Adolescente) makes the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela one of three countries in Latin America that prohibits corporal punishment in all settings, including in the home and family. Remaining challenges in child protection include the creation of a new administrative structure for the National System for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents; reform of the judicial processes to make them more accessible to the general population; and monitoring of implementation of the new protection system. Recently, additional laws and regulations have been adopted to address issues such as breastfeeding, parenting, violence against women, child protection regarding the use of the Internet, the inclusion of indigenous peoples, and sexual and reproductive health.

7. The country presented its progress report for the World Fit for Children + 5 conference and its second country report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2007. The Committee made 63 recommendations, including the following: (a) strengthen the protection system; (b) prevent and eradicate violence against children in line with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children; (c) universalize birth registration; (d) apply international standards for juvenile justice; (e) encourage the establishment of mechanisms for the participation of children and adolescents; (f) prepare a plan of action for children; (g) make visible investments in children; (h) universalize education and health services; (i) strengthen information systems on children's rights; and (j) enhance civil society participation.

8. The National Statistical System has made efforts to produce data to monitor the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals and the rights of children, but there remain limitations in data disaggregation for highlighting gaps by subnational categories and population groups. There is a lack of quality information regarding HIV-infection rates. Information also is limited on breastfeeding rates, child labour, violence against children, institutionalized children, adolescents in conflict with the law, and birth registration. Moreover, updated and systematic information on public investment needs to be further strengthened.

9. Available data reflect some important accomplishments in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The targets for reduction of extreme poverty and increased access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities have been met. Between 2002 and 2007, the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty was reduced from 20.1 per cent to 9.7 per cent, when the Goal set for 2015 was 12 per cent. The country is also on track to meet the targets for universal access and gender equity in primary education, and for the reduction of child mortality. However, wide disparities in income distribution prevail. Since 2000, income distribution has remained about the same: 50 per cent of the country's income goes to the richest quintile, while 5 per cent goes to the poorest quintile.

10. The reduction in extreme poverty is closely associated with strong GNP growth, which is based mainly on oil revenue and is therefore strongly influenced by oil prices. Any negative change in these prices could reverse what has been achieved in poverty reduction. In the meantime, the cost of living has increased. Although there is a price control policy in place, the price of the basic food basket rose from more than \$155 in 2002 to more than \$259 in 2007 in nominal terms, and this increase has a significant impact on the poor.

11. Though good progress has been made in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the provision of quality services remains a major challenge. There is no mechanism for measuring quality of education. In 2005, pre-primary education covered 54.6 per cent of children 3-6 years old and the net enrolment rate for basic education (9 years) increased from 89.8 per cent in 2002 to 91.9 per cent in 2005. Challenges also remain in ensuring continuity from primary to secondary school. School dropout increases when children reach the sixth grade of basic education, continuing a past trend; in 2005, only one third of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 were enrolled in secondary education. Furthermore, rural and indigenous communities have an enrolment rate 20 per cent lower than the national average. Nevertheless, the Government has stressed the importance of improving childhood education through the development of a culture of citizenship values and rights.

12. National policies have succeeded in reducing child mortality, and the country is expected to meet the Millennium Development Goal target by 2015. The under-five mortality rate decreased from 33 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 21 per 1,000 live births in 2006. A key challenge is to reduce neonatal mortality, which has remained steady at 12 per 1,000 live births. Some 22 per cent of children under five show some degree of malnutrition, and the chronic malnutrition rate shows only a minor decrease, from 12.9 per cent in 2002 to 11.8 per cent in 2005. Significant geographical disparities remain, with malnutrition rates in some areas double the national average.

13. The Ministry of Health has recognized the need to reduce maternal deaths. The maternal mortality ratio is 60 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to 2000-2006 data. Obstetric complications account for 80 per cent of maternal deaths. One contributing factor is the large number of births among adolescent mothers: it has been estimated that 21 per cent of total births are to mothers in this age group. Despite these challenges, it is important to note, however, that 95 per cent of deliveries are assisted by trained and qualified personnel.

14. Mortality due to HIV/AIDS dropped from being the fifth to the sixth cause of death for the 15-24 age group. However, some estimates indicate a feminization of

the epidemic. In 2005, statistics revealed that 57 of every 100 HIV-positive children in the 0-14 age group are girls.

15. Urban violence is reflected in increased homicide rates. In 1999, 13 of every 100,000 children and adolescents were murdered; this number increased to 24 in 2006, the year in which homicide became the main cause of death for male adolescents aged 15-19 years. In 2006, 4,858 children and adolescents died of violent causes, with one third of those cases homicides. Although there is not enough official data available on other forms of violence against children and women, evidence suggests significant levels of domestic violence.

16. The country has experienced several emergency situations caused by disasters, especially rainstorms. A significant number of the poor dwell in communities that are highly vulnerable to earthquakes, floods and landslides. Government capacity in emergency response is well developed, and Venezuela has assisted many other countries in response to emergencies. However, there are critical gaps, including in psychosocial support to children affected by emergencies.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation

Key results achieved

17. The country programme 2002-2007 aimed to contribute to outcome-level results in institutional change, policy development, and capacity development. As noted above, the principal national system for child rights protection is the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; the framework for its implementation comprises a wide range of entities and organizations. Almost two thirds of the protection system's entities were established with UNICEF technical assistance and training. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict was applied for the first time in the country in 2004. Technical guidelines proposed by UNICEF were incorporated into laws, regulations and protection policies such as birth registration; child protection regarding use of the Internet; prevention and care for victims of trafficking; promotion of breastfeeding; and regulation of breastfeeding substitutes. The State's emergency management organization incorporated a human rights approach in its national plan and in training on disaster prevention and response.

18. Birth registration coverage increased from 80 per cent to 95 per cent between 2001 and 2007. UNICEF contributed to the design and implementation of the National Identity Programme to ensure free-of-charge and on-time delivery of birth certificates, and the opening of Unidades de Registro Civil en Establecimientos de Salud (Civil Births Registry Units in hospitals). The programme Trio for Life (civil registry, breastfeeding and immunization) was incorporated by the Health Ministry as a communication strategy to promote a good start to life. The curriculum for young children incorporated the rights of children and the concept of integral protection.

19. UNICEF technical assistance contributed to the institutionalization and implementation of intercultural bilingual education among three indigenous groups. A national indigenous adolescent network was also created in alliance with indigenous organizations and national universities. Training on rights is now provided by participation forums that were established for indigenous children and adolescents. Following the recommendation of the midterm review of the country

programme, the next challenge was to make the Afro-descendant population visible in public policies. UNICEF support contributed to the Presidential decree for the creation of La Comisión Educativa para la No Discriminación (Commission against all Forms of Racial Discrimination in Education) and to the inclusion of relevant data in national statistics.

20. Strategic alliances with government institutions, the private sector, civil society, communications media, universities and the United Nations system facilitated the generation of knowledge and the dissemination of information on the rights of children. The main results were as follows: (a) a DevInfo-web version was incorporated by the National Statistics Institute as a tool for dissemination and monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals; (b) higher visibility was given to children's rights through national coverage of campaigns on peaceful coexistence of people in a context of high social and political polarization, through HIV prevention, through the prevention of violence against women and children, and through campaigns involving the Copa América (America's Cup) 2007 championship; (c) national programmes and processes were influenced as a result of recommendations made in studies on issues such as traditional child-rearing patterns in six indigenous groups, consultations with children and adolescents on Internet use, school assistance for indigenous children and adolescents, and the systematization of media information regarding children; and (d) two postgraduate programmes were established in well-known universities, one on the rights of children and the other on intercultural bilingual education.

Lessons learned

21. The centrality of knowledge-generation and evidence-based advocacy means that monitoring and evaluation are integral to the country programme. Monitoring and evaluation, communication, and social mobilization are key strategies to advocate and stimulate dialogue on public policies with different sectors of the society. They are, therefore, critical cross-cutting elements in all components of the country programme. These strategies take on even more importance in light of the fact that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is in a heightened state of institutional and social transformation. Monitoring based on sound data plays a vital role in programme management and contributes to the dissemination of information.

22. In the previous cycle, there was insufficient integration between local interventions of the subregional programme and the overall country programme and the national policy work. This meant that synergies were not fully exploited. A key lesson is that coordinated management of the two components of the programme is essential, as is integrating country programme components with subregional programmes. These strategies will help to inform local and national public policies and support the shift from a project-oriented approach to a public policy approach.

23. One of the achievements of the country programme is that UNICEF has high visibility and credibility. The credibility, moral authority, and independent voice of UNICEF have played a key role in the construction of a protective environment for children. This is particularly relevant in a country that has achieved good economic and social targets but is still struggling to overcome social exclusion and violence against children. There is an opportunity now to build on this recognition of UNICEF, and to ensure that all communication work is coordinated with resource mobilization and programme implementation, all closely aligned to better achieve results for children.

24. Until now, alliances with corporate donors have been aimed mainly at fund-raising and, to a lesser extent, on promotion of citizenship-building. Resource mobilization in middle-income countries needs to overcome a reputation for being assistance-oriented and philanthropic and to be viewed instead as a partnership based on equality and co-responsibility for efforts that contribute to a greater and more sustainable social investment for children.

The country programme 2009-2013

Summary budget table

(In United States dollars)

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
More Protection, Less Violence	1 175 000	3 019 000	4 194 000
More Inclusion, Less Disparity	825 000	3 580 000	4 405 000
Cross-sectoral costs	700 000	1 591 000	2 291 000
Total	2 700 000	8 190 000	10 890 000

Preparation process

25. The country programme for 2002-2007 was extended for one year to cover 2008 at the request of the Government, so that the new full-cycle programme could be aligned with national priorities that were being identified in the national development plan for 2008-2013. The Situation Analysis, prepared jointly with the Planning and Development Ministry, was the basis for the incorporation of issues affecting children and adolescents in the Common Country Assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The country programme document was developed in full consultation with national counterparts, and rigorously adhered to the UNDAF framework. The adjustments recommended by the 2005 midterm review were taken into consideration, and the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan provided an overarching framework for aligning results with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Goals, key results and strategies

26. State structures and processes continue to undergo modification, which presents opportunities and challenges for the realization of children's rights and implementation of the country programme. With its main strategies oriented to this ever-changing context, the country programme has as its main objective to ensure that children and adolescents are at the centre of governmental and social agendas for the development of a protective environment and the realization of child rights in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Millennium Development Goals.

27. The More Protection, Less Violence programme component has the following key planned results: (a) administrative, judicial and security entities give adequate attention to, and apply correct protocols for, the most common cases of violence against children and adolescents; (b) all adolescents in conflict with the law have access to national socio-educative programmes and rehabilitation services;

(c) adolescents, teachers, health workers and social workers in the two largest urban centres implement positive adolescent-development initiatives emphasizing life skills for prevention of violence, exploitation, abuse, HIV and teenage pregnancies; (d) disaggregated and up-to-date data on children and adolescents and on the child protection sector are available for policymakers and practitioners; and (e) all children and adolescents affected by disasters and conflict receive adequate psychosocial support.

28. The More Inclusion, Less Disparity programme component has the following planned key results: (a) teachers in primary and secondary education apply curricula and pedagogical practices good treatment of children and adolescents, respect for cultural diversity and non-discrimination; (b) children aged 1 to 6 in government-managed day care programmes receive quality integral attention; (c) allocation of social budgets analysed and reported; (d) enterprises incorporate children's rights into their policies, especially regarding breastfeeding, HIV, violence-prevention, early childhood education and child labour; (e) quality, timely and disaggregated information on children and adolescents covering key social sectors and issues — especially nutrition, HIV/AIDS and educational quality — is available for evidence-based planning and decision-making.

29. The human rights-based approach will be a key strategy of the country programme, which will emphasize the capacity development of duty bearers and the empowerment of rights holders, including the participation of children and adolescents. The generation and dissemination of knowledge is another critical strategy, encompassing the availability of strategic information for guiding and evaluating public policy, for more effective social investment. The knowledge generated will contribute to the regional integration and exchange initiatives in which the country plays a role. Close coordination and integration among communication, fund-raising and programmes will characterize the implementation of the proposed country programme, reflecting the opportunities and challenges presented by the situation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as a middle-income country. There will be a wide range of partnerships, including with civil society and the private sector.

30. While influencing national social and protection policies is a main goal, the country programme will at the same time focus its efforts on the urban poor, who form the bulk of the poor in the country. Special emphasis will be placed on supporting the implementation of local policies, especially in education and protection services, in at least the two largest urban centres. In particular, this support will aim to reach the most-excluded population and adolescents, and these local-level interventions will be evaluated for potential scaling-up at regional and national levels.

Relationship to national priorities and UNDAF

31. The country programme and UNDAF are aligned with socio-political principles enshrined in the Constitution, the National Plan of Economic and Social Development 2008-2013 and its strategic lines, defined as the “five engines of the revolution” (*cinco motores de la revolución*). The challenges to be addressed in this national plan are also those of the proposed country programme, including integral protection for children, development of values to build citizenship, social inclusion, strengthening of community participation, and institutional reform for the protection of children's rights. The UNDAF has the following programme areas: (a) health,

prevention of HIV, and violence prevention for children and women; (b) reduction of poverty and social and gender inequities, food and nutritional security, and the strengthening of the National Statistics System; (c) education, using an intercultural and gender approach; (d) human development and participation; (e) environment, risk management and humanitarian assistance. As a result of the involvement of UNICEF, children's issues are highlighted in more than one third of UNDAF results, including those of children's rights, violence prevention, adolescent development, early childhood development, primary and secondary education, reduction of disparities, especially for indigenous and Afro-descendent populations, and production of information.

Relationship to international priorities

32. The goals of the proposed country programme are fully aligned with international commitments and obligations, namely: the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Durban Declaration and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The goals are aligned with the targets of the Millennium Declaration and *A World Fit for Children* and the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. The proposed country programme aligns with the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006-2009, placing particular emphasis on focus area 2 (basic education and gender equality), focus area 4 (child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse) and focus area 5 (policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights).

Programme components

33. The proposed country programme for 2009-2013 aims to achieve results for children by influencing public policies and empowering rights holders. Education will be a key strategy for social inclusion and the prevention of violence towards children.

More Protection, Less Violence

34. This component will prioritize the strengthening of the national protection system, and will support the capacity development and empowerment of rights holders, especially adolescents. The institutionalization required to implement the improved national legislation has not yet been achieved. Thus, a main goal of this programme component is to support the establishment of effective institutions for the protective system and the strengthening of a culture of values and rights.

35. **The protective and friendly system** sub-component focuses on the effective implementation of policies, plans and legislative measures. Key actions will contribute to implementation of the protective system for an effective response; the monitoring of violence against children as a core part of reform of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents; proper implementation of procedures registering rights violations; appropriate institutionalization and provision of resources for the national birth registration programme; and the generation of knowledge on child protection issues.

36. **The adolescent development** sub-component makes adolescents a priority as a means to prevent violence and strengthen citizenship. Protective networks within

schools, families and communities will be strengthened through the development of life skills, supporting the resilience of pre-adolescents and adolescents, and their capacity to reach their potential; the development of adolescent leadership; mass-media promotion of a positive view of adolescents; implementation of international standards on juvenile justice; and knowledge-generation on adolescents' development and environment.

37. UNICEF will work with the Supreme Court of Justice, the Ombudsperson Office, the National Electoral Council, the Ministries for social and judicial issues, the National Statistics Institute, security entities and local governments. Alliances with non-governmental organizations, churches, universities, mass media, and the private sector, and with popular, cultural and sports organizations, will help to develop actions to assist out-of-school children. Traditional and alternative media will continue to be partners in communication and education campaigns for attitudinal and behavioural change in families and communities as well as in children and adolescents themselves.

More Inclusion, Less Disparity

38. This component will promote the visibility and positioning of children and adolescents at the centre of national and local public policies and budgets for reduction of disparities, emphasizing early childhood development and secondary education. Strengthening competencies for public management is another key goal. The component will contribute to improved quality of education, increased attendance in secondary schools, and the promotion of the value of education as key strategies for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents. Together with the subregional programme PROINCLUSION, this component will influence public policies for local and national impact. Actions focusing on the most excluded communities — Afro-descendants and indigenous populations, especially in peri-urban areas in municipalities of highly populated cities — will be developed to generate best practices at the local level that can later be expanded nationwide.

39. Key actions of the **public agenda for equity** sub-component will promote dialogue with the Government at the highest levels to influence planning processes and budgeting for children and adolescents. This dialogue will influence the design and implementation of the primary and secondary education curricula, with a human rights perspective, as well as the training of teachers. Emphasis will be given to the following: retaining as many adolescents as possible in secondary school or alternative forms of education, particularly in deprived urban areas; promoting the incorporation of a pedagogical component in the day-care centre programme; and with corporate allies, applying a model of social responsibility that prioritizes children's rights within enterprises.

40. The **facts to move on** sub-component will promote disaggregation of data and knowledge on the situation of children and adolescents, as well as the documentation and dissemination of good practices for strengthening the capacity of national and local institutions in planning results-based management and monitoring of social programmes. Data incorporated in DevInfo implemented by the National Statistics Institute will support the monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals and analysis on the situation of children.

41. The main UNICEF partnerships in this component are the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Ministry of Education, and other Ministries covering the

social sector and protection, the Ministry of Finance, the National Statistics Institute and selected local governments.

42. The **cross-sectoral** component will include all activities that support the general implementation of the programme, such as administrative actions to purchase supplies, monitoring, salaries for staff performing cross-cutting functions, private fund-raising and partnerships, and other areas.

Major partnerships

43. In order to meet UNDAF objectives in support of national priorities, UNICEF will work not only with the above-mentioned partners but also with other United Nations agencies. Strengthening the statistical information systems will continue to integrate the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF. With UNDP, UNICEF will also address disaster preparedness and mitigation. Work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other agencies is based on the mutual interest of strengthening the protection system to prevent all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse of children. UNICEF will complement UNFPA efforts on HIV-prevention policies and on strengthening the national health system that offers services for adolescents. UNICEF will partner with the Pan American Health Organization in addressing maternal mortality and in improving children's health and nutritional status. Violence issues require inter-agency efforts, including with agencies that do not have an established presence in the country, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

44. Promotion of a South-South exchange of experiences through regional organizations and forums will be a fundamental measure in placing children's issues on the regional agenda.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

45. Monitoring and evaluation are key tools for the country programme and UNDAF. Practices for planning, information-generation and the dissemination of quality and disaggregated official data will be strengthened within UNICEF and its main counterparts. A special effort in this regard will be made in the first two years of the country programme. A five-year Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) and annual IMEPs will identify monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, major studies, surveys, evaluations and research. The monitoring plan will reflect the UNDAF Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

46. During the cooperation cycle, two major reviews will be carried out: (a) the midterm review, which will take place in the first quarter of 2011; this review will contribute to (b) the UNDAF evaluation, which should take place in 2012. Mid-year and annual reviews of work plans will also take place. Field trips will be regularly undertaken by staff for monitoring UNICEF-supported activities. All reviews will be coordinated with national implementing partners under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning and Development.

47. A situation analysis on children, adolescents and women will be prepared during the first year of the country programme and will be continuously updated. Work with the National Statistics Institute will be essential for the production and dissemination of quality and disaggregated information and knowledge-generation.

48. UNICEF will adopt and comply with the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers, once the system becomes operational. Common services with UNHCR will help to integrate services and streamline the use of resources.
