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For information

Field visit of the Executive Board members to Peru and Panama, 25 – 31 March 2007

I. Introduction

A. Objectives of the visit

1. Members of the UNICEF Executive Board from Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Mauritania, Ukraine and Sweden visited Panama and Peru from 25 to 31 March 2007. The main purposes of the trip were to observe UNICEF field operations and the work of the United Nations country team in order (a) to understand the relationship of the UNICEF country programme to national development priorities, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and bilateral development assistance, and to understand the role of UNICEF in ongoing United Nations reform efforts; and (b) to provide insight into the implementation of UNICEF policies and strategies at the field level and to discuss the impact of the results of UNICEF programmes with the Government and non-governmental counterparts at national, local and community levels.

2. The visit was an opportunity for the Executive Board to obtain a first-hand view of UNICEF operations in a middle-income country. The delegation had the chance to observe how UNICEF is implementing its medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) priorities in an environment where social exclusion is a major problem.

B. Structure of the visit

3. The field visit was divided into two parts: a one-day visit in Panama organized by the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean; and a four-day visit in Peru organized by the UNICEF country office in Lima. The programme of the visit included meetings with Government officials; representatives from United Nations organizations, including the Resident Coordinator and Heads of agencies; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); bilateral

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donors; and UNICEF staff, both in the capitals, Lima and Panama City, and in the Amazonas and Andean regions in Peru. In Peru, the Board members met with the Prime Minister, Dr. Jorge del Castillo Galvéz, and the Vice Minister and Secretary-General for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez Reinel.

4. In Panama, the delegation met with the Director of International Organizations and Conferences for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Delia Chevalier Villamonte, and the team of United Nations Regional Directors. A visit was made to the future site of the joint regional “hub” in the “City of knowledge” (*Ciudad del Saber*) complex. In the UNICEF offices, the team met with regional office staff, including regional advisers on priority areas for Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. In Peru, the delegation travelled to the District of Río Santiago, in the Condorcanqui Province of the Amazonas region and to the Chumpe community in the Calca Province of the Andean region, primarily to visit communities of socially excluded, indigenous people (Candoshi, Shapra, Awajum, Wampis and Quechua). In these areas, UNICEF supports programmes focusing on social inclusion policies that respect the cultural diversity of the various groups. The programmes covered the following areas: maternal and child health, early childhood growth and development, intercultural bilingual education, protection of children’s rights and the strengthening of institutional capacity and community participation. Special efforts were undertaken in the areas of reducing chronic malnutrition and of halting the spread of hepatitis B.

6. The members of the delegation were divided into two groups in Lima, who each visited one of the following programmes: HIV/AIDS, focusing on prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV; and the child and adolescent defence centres.

II. Background - Peru

A. Political and social context

7. Since the new Government took office in July 2006, Peru has undergone a period of political stability and economic growth. During 2006, economic growth was over 7 per cent while the annual inflation rate was only 1.5 per cent. Nevertheless, poverty remains high, and 48 per cent of families are poor, having at least one basic need unsatisfied. Tax collections increased to an estimated 15 per cent of gross domestic product at the end of 2006, which is still low compared to the average for Latin America.

8. Although overall, the country is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, profound disparities are hidden behind national indicators. For instance, poverty, infant mortality, maternal mortality and malnutrition rates in the Andean areas are two times higher than the national averages. A similar disparity affects the scattered indigenous groups living in the Amazon, some of which are still at risk of extinction from disease, malnutrition and environmental degradation. In education, although primary school gross enrolment rates indicate universal access, poor learning achievements uncover serious quality problems.

9. The Government has made decentralization a priority, aiming to transfer human and financial resources to regional and municipal governments by the end of 2007. There is also a

commitment to run a pilot experience to assess the ‘municipalization’ of primary health care and of the management of schools and education programmes.

B. The situation of children and women

10. Making childbirth safe is a high priority. The infant mortality rate (for children under one year old), which is 23 per 1,000 live births, includes a large number of neonatal deaths. The overall figures indicate that the institutional birth rate climbed from 59 per cent in 2000 to 70.4 per cent between 2004 and 2005. Institutional birth in the areas covered by the Juntos Programme¹ increased from 50 per cent to 70 per cent. Nonetheless, dramatic differences exist between and within urban and rural areas. UNICEF has provided support for “Maternity Waiting Houses” and “cultural adaptation of the childbirth position [squatting]” used by women in indigenous and other groups. These innovations have been adopted by the State as part of public health policy and have helped to ensure that women in remote communities have better care and attention.

11. The mortality rate for children under five is 34 per 1,000 live births. This represents a reduction of 30 per cent over rates in 2000 and places Peru among the countries in the Americas that have managed to lower child mortality the most. Nevertheless, according to the 2005 Demographic and Health Survey, 24.1 per cent of children under five are chronically malnourished, and this figure has remained stable over the last 10 years. In rural areas, this average increases to 39 per cent. For that reason, the Government’s decision to lower the rate of chronic malnutrition of children under five by at least 5 percentage points in the next five years is fundamental.

12. In education, indicators show no major gender disparities, but girls still have trouble completing their education, mainly because of cultural factors. Because the distance between home and school is often long, many parents fear that their girls might be exposed to sexual aggression on their way to and from school. The risks continue on school premises, where repeated cases of sexual harassment and violence have also been noted. Pregnant schoolgirls face additional challenges, often quitting their education because of stigma or practical difficulties. All of these factors are part of the complex reasons why girls drop out of school.

13. The penal code reform resulted in stronger punishment for rapists and introduced amendments that afford better protection to victims. However, difficulties persist in fully implementing the protective laws. There are still major challenges regarding the attitudes and behaviour surrounding sexuality and sexual violence in society that need to be addressed – including the role of boys and men in the family. For example, many victims of rape and sexual abuse hesitate to take legal action for fear of being re-victimized.

14. Approximately 34 per cent of the Peru’s population of 27.2 million people is made up of young people between the ages of 10 and 24. Given the high percentage of adolescents and youth in society, HIV/AIDS is a concern. Indeed, between 11,400 and 20,200 people aged 15-24 were living with HIV/AIDS in 2004, and AIDS is the third-highest cause of death within this population group. Therefore, HIV/AIDS prevention is a priority among adolescents, who commonly have risky sexual relations, often with no protection.

¹ A conditional cash transfer programme for the country’s poorest families, covering more than 200,000 mothers.

15. The 2006 Parliamentary elections resulted in a significant increase in women's political presence. Thirty-five of the 120 elected members of Congress are women, as are 6 of the 14 Cabinet Ministers.

III. UNICEF contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Main objectives, strategies and contribution to the achievement of the Goals, especially in the context of national targets and priorities and the MTSP

A. Coordination with the Government and other partners, including United Nations agencies, in the context of United Nations reform

16. UNICEF Peru works at both the national and local levels. It advocates for children's rights with prominent national actors, including Ministries, Congress, the media, the private sector and civil society. At the same time, UNICEF focuses on specific regions where child-related indicators are worst, particularly the rural Andean and Amazon areas.

17. United Nations cooperation benefits from the synchronized cycles of the Executive Committee funds and programmes: the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF. Their country programme documents (CPDs, 2006-2010) are aligned with the UNDAF-Peru and contribute to its outcomes. A total of 19 agencies participate in the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), and the Resident Coordinator has been leading the United Nations reform agenda, ensuring effective coordination, joint programmes and initiatives, as well as common services. In addition to the four Executive Committee agencies, UNICEF also works closely with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and especially in the field of nutrition, the World Bank.

18. UNICEF holds the Chair of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS programme in Peru and is active in several inter-agency coordinating committees. UNICEF is also initiating an alliance against chronic malnutrition with other agencies in the United Nations system (FAO, PAHO/WHO, UNFPA and WFP), international cooperation agencies and NGOs. There are also sector-wide coordination groups in health and gender.

B. Main achievements and expected results

19. At the level of advocacy and public policy, the UNCT and its civil society partners succeeded in positioning malnutrition and violence high on the political agenda. The Government has prioritized these two issues in its programme. An important result for the UNCT and its civil society supporters was obtained when Congress established a commission on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and when 12 priority activities for children were reincorporated into the budget law for 2007. The Peruvian Ombudsperson also created a specific office for children and adolescents.

20. At the institutional level, UNICEF and its partners contributed to the development of capacity in several areas relevant to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Regarding HIV/AIDS, after several years of work in PMTCT, adequate protocols are now in place, health staff are trained, and (as of 2006) HIV testing has reached about 45 per cent of pregnant women. With

UNAIDS, UNICEF provided technical assistance for the preparation of a new country proposal with a strong PMTCT component for submission to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. The proposal was approved and, together with two other Global Fund projects, has secured over \$40 million to sustain the national response for the next four years.

21. The Interagency Coordinating Committee on Gender, of which UNICEF is a member, continued to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and advocated for Peru to systematically adopt a gender-based approach in policies, reports, analyses and the like. While there have been no major changes in reports generated by Congress, by the Ministry of Education and by the Ministry of Women and Social Development, the Ministry of Health has systematically adopted gender-based approaches. In the area of sexual abuse and exploitation, special rooms have been set up for private interviews with girls and women who are victims as a way to help them avoid being re-victimized.

C. Opportunities, constraints and future outlook

22. The private sector, which is becoming increasingly aware of the threat to political stability posed by exclusion and social disparity, has raised its level of social responsibility and is progressing to providing more systemic support to social policies. For instance, the two most important corporate congresses of last year dealt with social exclusion and the quality of education, with both meetings aiming to increase corporate social responsibility and to mobilize financial resources.

23. Classified as a middle-income country, Peru does not access large amounts of funding from the international community. In recent years, several bilateral donors have withdrawn support and others are scaling down. In this context, the role of UNICEF in particular, and of the United Nations system in general, is to ensure that through solid dialogue with the Government, priorities for children are well reflected in national policies.

24. The major constraints hindering the fulfilment of children's rights countrywide are related to the high level of centralization of decision-making and of control of resources in the capital. Nominally, local governments receive an important share of the national budget, but in practice bureaucratic barriers are such that most of it remains unspent. One of the major issues with decentralization is the lack of capacity of local governments to fulfil their new responsibilities and to handle the financial resources they have been given. Moreover, the funds they do receive are often insufficient to address the needs for which they are intended. In an attempt to tackle the problem of duplication, inefficiency and high administrative costs of poverty alleviation and social assistance programmes, the Government has begun to rationalize and consolidate them from 82 to less than 20.

25. Given the above, the challenges ahead for the United Nations system in Peru are clear. On the one hand, a maximum effort must be made to maintain the current political focus on human development in general, and Millennium Development Goals in particular, through joint advocacy with the rest of the United Nations family and civil society partners vis-à-vis the Government, Congress, and the private sector. On the other hand, sustained technical assistance should be provided to build capacity, particularly at the regional and local levels.

IV. Conclusions

A. Observations

26. Peru is going through an interesting transition period marked by positive economic development and led by a new Government. The Government has promised efforts to reduce poverty and exclusion by, among other means, resuming decentralization, with the aim of transferring human and financial resources to regional and municipal governments.

27. The presence of UNICEF in Peru is important during this period. UNICEF is a strong advocate for the rights of children and women, especially of socially excluded groups in poor rural and urban areas. The impression of the delegation is that UNICEF, through the sharing of its expertise and engagement in capacity development, can play an important role in assisting the Government at regional and local levels to handle the decentralization of resources for social spending.

28. The delegation's view is that UNICEF has a special role to play through its human rights-based approach. The programme is focusing on children and women whose rights are threatened by social exclusion, discrimination and gender inequities. The emphasis is on strengthening the capabilities of duty bearers and rights holders to ensure that children and women are able to exercise their rights.

29. Regarding maternal health, the areas of comparative advantage of UNFPA and UNICEF need to be explored further.

30. The delegation concluded that it should not be the role of UNICEF to provide socially excluded communities with basic social services in the long run. This means that the Government must be prepared to expand its reach and take over these services as soon as it is capable of doing so.

31. The delegation also concluded that a more systematic approach was needed to tackle issues regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. Follow-up on the recommendations from the 2004 evaluation of the Peru-UNICEF country programme should be pursued. The evaluation noted that "it would be appropriate to make a global gender analysis of access to resources and services for families and communities and their control, as well in wider contexts, and to integrate the result of this analysis in the development of future strategies and programming practices". The delegation did not get clear answers regarding the status of follow-up in this regard. UNICEF should also work with partners on the sexual behaviour of men and boys and the norms of masculinity in society. Further efforts were also needed to reinforce the legal system.

32. The delegation had the overall impression that not all the recommendations of the 2004 country programme evaluation of Peru were well known. The evaluation is an important tool that should continue to guide the work of the UNICEF team in Peru.

33. Government officials and other partners, including United Nations agencies, expressed great satisfaction with the cooperation with UNICEF.

34. Representatives of the Government did not express any strong views regarding the set of recommendations from the 2006 report of the United Nations High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence.
35. Representatives of the delegation clarified that the “One United Nations” recommendation should not be interpreted as a cost-cutting exercise but rather as a way to strengthen the relevance of the United Nations as a whole at the country level, particularly in delivering development cooperation. “One United Nations” should also ease the burden of Governments, facilitating and consolidating their interaction with agencies by providing one central United Nations counterpart instead of what is commonly 15 or more.
36. UNICEF Peru is moving toward applying a results-based management system. The 2007 annual work plan has been designed with a results-based approach. Results frameworks and log frames with expected results, indicators and means of verification are being designed for the various programme components. Though the monitoring and evaluation function has suffered because of a vacancy for this post, the post was filled in February 2007. The delegation encourages UNICEF Peru to continue with its efforts in this regard not least because it is obvious that attribution of results is particularly difficult in a middle-income country like Peru, where policy dialogue and capacity development constitute major components of the programme.
37. UNICEF staff members expressed the need to spend more of the budget on staff. Especially in a middle-income country, they said, “the programme is the staff and the staff is the programme”. It was also felt that a few smaller projects were needed to strengthen the credibility of UNICEF as a policy advisor and to provide the Government with good examples for scale-up.
38. The UNCT seemed to work well together under the coordinating umbrella of the Resident Coordinator. Sector-wide approaches were applied in education, gender and HIV/AIDS.
39. In Panama, the efforts by the Regional Directors to improve collaboration were seen as a commendable example for other regions. The Regional Directors team for Latin America and the Caribbean is coordinating efforts for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, for an exchange of ideas and collaboration on politically sensitive situations, for the comprehensive review of selected Resident Coordinator annual reports, and for follow-up on the common country assessment and UNDAF. The effort to set up common premises in the “City of Knowledge” is promising.
40. The Executive Board members were struck by the dedication of the UNICEF staff.
41. The delegation was also impressed with the thoroughness of the practical arrangements, support and assistance provided by UNICEF during the visit.

B. Recommendations for future visits

42. The delegation found the field visit to be relevant and useful. To improve the benefits derived from such visits in the future, the participants made the following recommendations:

- (a) The programme was very dense, with almost one air flight per day during the week in combination with early mornings, late evenings and demanding field visits. All parts of the

programme were highly appreciated, but to spread them over one or two more days would have given the delegation a bit more time for reflection and deepened conversations with different counterparts;

(b) The delegation would have appreciated having more time allocated in the programme for internal discussions. One of the added values of field visits is to be able to discuss concrete examples of programmes, coordination, reforms, challenges in fulfilling Millennium Development Goals and other issues with members of the different geographic groups of the Executive Board, in a relaxed atmosphere.

Annex 1

List of participants

H.E. Mr. Javier Loayza Barea
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Bolivia to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Anders Lidén
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

Ms. Hélène Corneau
Director, United Nations and Commonwealth Division, Canadian International Development
Agency, Canada

Mr. Jiddou Ould Abderrahmane
First Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Mauritania to the United Nations

Mrs. Maria Fabiana Loguzzo
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations

Mr. Andriy Nikitov
Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations

Ms. Ann Måwe (rapporteur)
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations

Ms. Lisa Krug
Editor, Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

Annex 2

Summary of the programme of field visits and meetings

Monday, 26 March (Panama)

1. Meeting with United Nations Regional Directors and regional international NGOs at the WFP regional office
2. Visit to “City of Knowledge” (*Ciudad del Saber*) to see the future United Nations hub facilities
3. Meeting and lunch with staff of the UNICEF regional office
4. Meeting with UNICEF Regional Programme Advisers

Tuesday, 27 March (Peru, Amazon region)

1. Lunch meeting in the city of Santa Maria de Nieva on the Río Marañón in the Amazon region (department of Amazonas in the province of Condorcanqui)
2. Interactive meeting with representatives of the indigenous Candoshi and Shapra peoples, with whom UNICEF is working on hepatitis B prevention, in the Office of the Regional Government. The group included nurse Guillermo Sumbi, who had addressed the Executive Board at the second regular session of 2006 during the special focus session on Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Briefing by UNICEF staff in the UNICEF zone office
4. Informal dinner with local authorities

Wednesday, 28 March (Peru, Amazon region)

1. Travel via riverboat to visit indigenous communities along the Río Santiago in the Amazon region who receive UNICEF support for the development of health, education and child protection services, along with community empowerment and municipal strengthening
 - (a) Visit to San Rafael indigenous community
 - (b) Visit to Belén indigenous community

Thursday, 29 March (Peru, Lima)

1. Meeting with United Nations Resident Coordinator Jorge Chediek and the UNCT at the UNDP offices in Lima

2. Courtesy visit to the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Gonzalo Gutiérrez at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3. Group 1 (participants divided into two groups) visit to the Maternal and Perinatal Institute in Lima (*Maternidad de Lima*)
4. Group 2 visit to a school defence centre at School No. 6038 “Ollanty” (*Defensoría Escolar del Niño y Adolescente*) in San Juan de Miraflores
5. Meeting with the Peru Country Management Team at the UNICEF office
6. Meeting with the Prime Minister of Peru, Dr. Jorge del Castillo Galvéz at the Office of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers
7. Reception for Ministers, ambassadors and partners from the private sector and cooperation agencies at the UNICEF office

Friday, 30 March (Peru, Andean region)

1. One-day visit to the rural community of Chumpe, district of Lamay, department of Cusco, in the Andean region. Visits to and briefings on the various activities supported by UNICEF as part of an integrated package of services: health, education, early childhood development, prevention of HIV and child protection.
 2. Meeting with staff at the UNICEF Cusco zonal office
 3. Debriefing of the delegation and discussion of the field visit report
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