

Update on the context and situation of children

Costa Rica is an upper middle-income country with notable social and economic progress, especially with regards to children and adolescents, who account for 31% of the total population of approximately 5 million inhabitants. Despite the country's advanced economic status and social protection schemes, it is still highly unequal. The percentage of poor households slipped from 21.1% in 2018 to 21.0% in 2019, while that of extremely poor households fell from 6.3% to 5.8%, although the reductions vary in different regions especially along geographical lines and concentrations of indigenous and afrodescendent populations. The percentage of children living in poverty rose from 33% to 35%, although extreme poverty in this group decreased from 11.72% in 2018 to 10.53% (INEC, 2018).

Important disparities affect early childhood development, where national services reach only 20% of poor children. According to the 2018 MICS, 85% of children aged 3-4 years nationally enjoy an adequate level of physical, emotional and intellectual development, increasing to 94% in the wealthiest households and dropping to 79% in the poorest. (INEC, Ministry of Health, UNICEF, 2018) Roughly 44% of children 36-59 months old receive early childhood development, although rising to 52% for the wealthiest quintile and falling to 40% for the poorest. Costa Rica faces challenges concerning breastfeeding, with only 53% of infants breastfed in the first hour after birth, with a very interesting disparity: 56% of infants in the poorest quintile compared to 33% of infants in the wealthiest quintile.

2018 data shows that 73% of adolescents complete junior high school whereas only 58% complete high school, despite the country's significant investment in education (close to 8% of GDP). Inequalities also abound: junior high school completion rates are 91% for the richest children compared to 51% for the poorest, a significant 40-point differential, but the disparity is even starker in high school (86% for the richest, and 28% for the poorest). MICS data shows that the risk of dropping out of junior high school due to overage (two years or more) follows clear patterns of wealth (33% poorest, 18% richest), geography (28% urban, 21% rural) and gender (27.5% boys, 24.7% girls).

Violence against children is a national challenge. MICS data illustrates an increase from 46% (2011) to 49% (2018) of children aged 2-14 who had experienced at least one kind of physical or psychological abuse by their parents or caregivers. A third of this age group (34%) had suffered from psychological aggression. Another worrisome finding is that 24% of the MICS adult respondents felt that physical punishment of children and adolescents is a necessary and appropriate measure of discipline.

The country has registered important achievements in the reduction of adolescent pregnancy rates from 19.4% (2012) to 14.7% (2017), but these mask important disparities along ethnic lines - 19% and 22% amongst afrodescendent and indigenous adolescents, respectively. These declines also mask an uptick in the percentage of adolescent mothers with two or more children, from 8.8% in 2013 to 9.3% in 2018 (INEC, 2018).

MICS data also produced relevant information regarding the functional difficulties of 15-17 year-old adolescents, indicating that 8.3% have anxiety problems and 5% have problems accepting change. Physically, their main difficulty is seeing (3.8%). UNICEF-supported surveys indicate that 34% of children aged 6-12 years are overweight and obese, up from 21% in 2008. These trends confirm the need to prioritize adolescent physical and mental health, development and wellbeing.

A combination of key social, political and economic trends and events characterized 2019 and introduced important risks and opportunities to UNICEF's topline priorities in Costa Rica. The National Assembly, after many months of contentious debates and strikes led by a coalition of labor unions, finally approved the fiscal reform package which will have a profound impact on the government's ability to sustain its investment in social protection and development services. However, in parallel, the flagship poverty reduction strategy, Bridge to Development, was redesigned to achieve greater focus in five priorities and to accelerate achievement of SDG 1, of which three concern UNICEF: Bridge to Wellbeing, Bridge to Prevention and Bridge to Community. This thematic disaggregation will allow for improved targeting, especially for

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children, adolescents and women, supported by a stronger gender-focused, results-based and rights-based approach to programming. This milestone is critical for UNICEF given that insufficient inter-institutional coordination is a fundamental barrier to achieve greater policy impact on children.

The approval of the Dual Training and Education Law will accelerate capacity building and job placement opportunities for thousands of at-risk adolescents and youth through enhanced dual education alternatives. Not only will this improved legal framework help advance SDG 8, but also supports the Generation Unlimited strategy to strengthen flexible employability options and build partnerships with the private sector.

Amidst much controversy, the President signed the Technical Standard for the Therapeutic Termination of Pregnancy, complying with a decree by the Interamerican Court of Human Rights and which will serve as the normative guide for medical staff to evaluate cases concerning the termination of pregnancy when a woman's life or health is endangered. In addition, 10-year-old girls will now receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, safeguarding women's right to safe reproductive and sexual health.

Costa Rica received the United Nations Champion of the Earth award in recognition of its extensive record of environmentalism, which includes its 2018-2050 National Decarbonization Plan. The country hosted PreCOP 25, where UNICEF, together with national authorities and civil society successfully positioned children's rights in the context of climate change policies by mobilizing the voices of environmentalist children, adolescents and youth, culminating in the participation of more than 70 adolescents and young persons from the continent in the Local Conference of Youth.

Costa Rica did not experience a humanitarian emergency due to a natural disaster, but continued being a net importer of migrants and asylum seekers from the region, especially from Nicaragua and Venezuela, which accounted in 2019 for almost 10,000 requests. As a result, UNICEF continued partnering with national authorities and other UN agencies to strengthen the protection of children, especially at border crossing areas.

Major contributions and drivers of results

The second year of the 2018-2022 country programme provided excellent opportunities to address five key barriers that affect the realization of the rights of the most vulnerable children in Costa Rica: design of public policies that limit greater incidence; institutional capacity constraints and insufficient coordination; inadequate societal awareness of the plight of children; spending inefficiencies; and social norms that perpetuate rights violations.

INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION (SDGS 3, 4 AND 5; UNDAF SP 2 ON INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING; UNICEF SP 1 EVERY CHILD SURVIVES AND THRIVES AND 2 EVERY CHILD LEARNS)

This outcome aims to support national institutions responsible for the education and care of children and adolescents to offer structured and relevant options to reduce educational exclusion, particularly among the most vulnerable populations, in line with priorities in the National Development and Public Investment Plan. Key achievements in 2019 were related to the construction of strategies to reduce educational exclusion focusing on secondary education and vocational/technical students and to the development of an institutional platform to accelerate the transition towards a comprehensive and inclusive ECD system.

Inclusive Quality Education

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) in the design of the National Strategy to Address Educational Exclusion, with special attention to the most vulnerable areas and populations. Technical assistance was also provided to the National Institute of Apprenticeship (INA) in designing its National Anti-exclusion Strategy for Technical and Informal

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Training Programs.

Promoting extra-curricular artistic and cultural offerings are key to combat educational exclusion and foster students' cognitive development. MEP and UNICEF organized several national and local activities, including the Children's Folklore Festival (800 children); the National Poetry Festival (14,000 children); the Pilot Motivational Reading Program (100 children); and ten workshops with the Costa Rican Educators Union (SEC) on the right to education, student participation and integrated early childhood development (500 teachers).

Ten risk prevention workshops were piloted with 300 preschool to primary school children in disaster-prone coastal schools and, based on the results of these workshops, MEP will replicate the methodology in a larger number of schools in 2020, thus guaranteeing sustainability.

Through the World's Largest Lesson (WLL), UNICEF and other UN agencies coordinated with the MEP to promote SDGs and the Agenda 2030, including, for the first time, a survey of approximately 4,000 students to determine their knowledge of SDGs and which identified priority concerns around access to clean water and sanitation, elimination of poverty, and use of affordable, non-polluting energy. These priorities informed the content of WLL 2019, which included three SDG leadership training workshops for students as well as a discussion involving students, teachers, administrators and the Minister of Public Education.

UNICEF and MEP have joined forces with the National Children's Hospital to streamline the application of a model to ensure the right to education of hospitalized children receiving prolonged medical treatment, benefiting close to 5,900 children. Efforts are underway to amplify the model to other hospitals.

Early Childhood Development

UNICEF focused on building intra- and inter-institutional coordination capacities for universal and integrated early childhood development services. Interventions concentrated on advocacy for comprehensive ECD policies, development of monitoring systems on coverage and quality of services, campaigns to promote preschool registration and system-wide institutional capacity-building.

UNICEF worked with the REDCUDI to strengthen and accelerate the development of an integrated and efficient early childhood quality care system. Responding to the need to strengthen interinstitutional collaboration and to generate common integrated care and development standards, UNICEF supported studies and the development of teaching standards, monitoring systems, and appropriate generic staff profiles for the different care alternatives. UNICEF helped create the REDCUDI information system, which will provide critical evidence to develop policies and programs aimed at the most vulnerable children and families.

MEP and UNICEF promoted universal preschool education through a national campaign aimed at increasing parent and caregiver awareness of the importance of enrolling their children and which contributed to increasing preschool enrollment rose from 84.5% (2018) to 90.3% (2019).

UNICEF supported the scaling up of the successful Music for Children program which builds young children's abilities to express feelings and ideas and develops memory, motor skills, creative talent and language skills. Results in 2019 included the training of an institutional team of 501 instructors to benefit close to 25,000 children in 2020.

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UNICEF strengthened its partnership with Fundación Gente to implement two regional education board meetings in the country's northern and Caribbean areas, attended by 820 board members, 100 directors and 660 school representatives from 15 regional education offices. The activities, which will benefit approximately 9,000 children, focused on building awareness among participants on the importance of strategies to promote integrated early childhood development.

CHILD PROTECTION (SDGS 1, 5 AND 16; UNDAF SP 3 ON SOCIAL PARTICIPATION; UNICEF SP 3 EVERY CHILD IS PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION)

This outcome strengthens child protection systems to prevent violence against children through the upscaling of innovative models and successful initiatives, and promotes the achievement of peace, justice and solid institutions to end all forms of abuse, exploitation, trafficking and violence against children and adolescents, through national agreements and social participation. It supports national priorities to improve the human security through violence prevention and adolescent empowerment models. Results in 2019 focused on the consolidation and upscaling of violence prevention models and pilots from prior years and the implementation of a C4D approach to transform social norms that reproduce child and gender-based violence.

Violence Prevention Models

UNICEF, the National Child Welfare Agency (PANI) and a community development association, continued to support the Forging Community Alliances (HALCOM) model that provided psychosocial assistance to 20 adolescents at risk of separation from their families. Preliminary outcomes were that participating adolescents continued to live with their families and study; those with addiction issues had joined rehabilitation programs; and those who were involved in unhealthy and violent relationships received psychosocial support and were able to refocus their lives. The model is expected to reach more than 500 adolescents.

In 2017, the judicial branch reported that most of the 8,861 adolescents involved in juvenile criminal proceedings lacked assistance, which was resulting in a high rate of noncompliance with alternative sentencing to imprisonment. Consequently, UNICEF helped develop a judicial mentoring model in 2019, that will lead to a nationwide judicial mentoring network to be implemented in 2020.

UNICEF continued to work with the Institute for Municipal Advisory and Development (IFAM), PANI, the Ministry of Planning and a consortium of NGOs to launch the second phase of the Child Friendly Municipalities program, which consists of an innovative online platform for municipalities to carry out new training and certification. It is expected that more local governments will join the already thirty-two participating local governments in an initiative which supports the development of local policies and programmes for the protection of children's rights and prevention of child violence. Costa Rica participated in the global Child Friendly Cities Summit (Cologne, October 2019) where it presented its good practices, lessons learned and success factors.

Given an increase in the incidence of self-inflicted violence and suicides among adolescents (the third highest cause of adolescent deaths nationwide), UNICEF, the Vice Ministries of Health, Peace and Youth, and various community associations, developed the mental health network model REDESSAM. Based on the successful Civic Centers Without Walls methodology for the prevention of juvenile violence through the promotion of art, recreation and positive empowerment, this model will be first piloted in areas characterized by a high incidence of mental health issues among adolescents and youths.

UNICEF contributed technical assistance and advocacy to open four new Houses of Happiness for the protection and prevention of violence against indigenous migrant children from Panamá accompanying their seasonal worker parents in Costa Rican coffee farms, expanding this year to sugar cane farms, which will provide services to 200 more children in addition to the 700 benefitted nationwide since 2018. The model, which fosters partnerships between the private sector

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and public child protection institutions was formally incorporated by Executive Decree into the social protection package for migrant populations.

UNICEF supported the implementation of the Listening Rooms model for the prevention of violence and educational exclusion of adolescents, the focus of which in 2019 was to help the MEP with its implementation and measurement of outcomes through contracted psychosocial professionals, launch of a volunteering program and preparation of a baseline. During this stage, the MEP covered 80% of the model's costs in 24 schools and positive impacts were fostered on the lives of the 800 participating students, 99% of whom stayed enrolled in their schools, and 376 critical cases were referred for specialized attention to manage issues such as self-inflicted injuries, suicidal ideation and attempts, family problems, bullying, depression, mourning and negligence.

National reporting and response mechanisms for cases of violence against children and adolescents were strengthened through the technical assistance provided to 9-1-1 hotline and the development of a new app for written georeferenced reporting using mobile phones, still the safest and most accessible means for many children and adolescents.

UNICEF continued to provide technical support to the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CNNA), specifically through the follow-up to the National Plan for Violence Prevention and Eradication Strategies by forming a specialized unit dedicated to monitoring its implementation.

Changing Social Norms

UNICEF continued to promote changes in social norms among individuals, communities and institutions to prevent them from contributing to the exploitation, abuse and exclusion of women, children and adolescents. Under a C4D approach, UNICEF conducted baseline studies to measure knowledge, attitudes and practices for the following models: Listening Rooms (prevention of violence and educational exclusion); Judicial Mentoring (support youth in conflict with the law); HALCOM (prevention of family separation); MERI (empowerment of indigenous Bribri and Ngäbe women); and REDESSAM (prevention of self-inflicted violence amongst young people). These baselines will help monitor outcomes, adjust strategies and provide evidence for the scaling up of the institutions' policies and programmes.

In response to the widespread practice of corporal punishment of children, UNICEF supported PANI to formulate and develop the Families in Action (FAMA) model to train trainers on positive child-rearing patterns and prevention of child violence. FAMA has created a critical mass of approximately 2,000 trainers nationwide with the tools needed to train and sensitize parents and caregivers on this issue. Following up on this model, UNICEF helped formulate an additional training module aimed at preventing the different types of violence faced by adolescents and promoting the integrated development of children in early childhood. The model, which includes UNICEF-supported face-to-face and digital training components, is implemented in partnership with PANI, REDCUDI and the Costa Rican Social Security Institute, which together represent the country's most extensive social work force thus representing a tremendous opportunity for scaling up.

Institutionalization is a common practice in Costa Rica for children and adolescents without parental care. Through an analytical study of the topic based on the tracking tool of the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, UNICEF prepared a workplan to promote de-institutionalization based on three strategic pillars: (i) preventing family separation; (ii) promoting family reintegration and foster care; and (iii) amplifying independent living arrangements.

UNICEF has made headway on preventing intrafamily violence affecting women, children and adolescents in indigenous communities. Technical assistance was provided to the Alakolpa Bribri Wak Tech Federation of Indigenous Women to develop a workplan for the training and empowerment of 200 indigenous members of 11 local organizations. Together with the local municipality's Network of Institutions Working Against Intrafamily Violence (REDVIF), the Federation is formulating proposals and mechanisms to advance the fulfillment of their rights, expand spaces for participation, and

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improve the quality of the public services they receive within the framework of their cultural rights.

SOCIAL INCLUSION, PUBLIC ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION (SDGS 1, 3, 5, 10 AND 17; UNDAF SP 1 LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND AND 3 SOCIAL PARTICIPATION; UNICEF SP 5 EVERY CHILD HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE IN LIFE)

This outcome strengthens the national framework of child inclusive policies, programs and social services through the generation of institutional capacities for situational analysis, monitoring and evaluation of policies; the improvement of inter-institutional coordination mechanisms and knowledge management; and effective social participation for change. The focus in 2019 was to advance the production of child-focused data; strengthen adolescent empowerment and participation interventions, especially through Generation Unlimited; and contribute to the construction of interinstitutional partnerships and knowledge generation platforms to advocate for policies and programmes aimed at increasing opportunities for the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The topline initiative was the 2018 Survey on Women, Children and Adolescents (EMNA), which is part of the sixth round of the global MICS program, the results of which were launched in 2019. UNICEF, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) and the Ministry of Health have developed a workplan to drive the analysis, use and dissemination of the survey data along with relevant advocacy based on this data. The MICS/EMNA results will also influence evidence-based policies that address gender issues at their root causes. Together with UN Women and the National Institute for Women (INAMU), UNICEF is supporting a child and gender analysis, and a gender situation analysis of children, adolescents and young persons was initiated to identify the key challenges that gender-focused strategies, programs and policies should address for the realization of their rights.

The evaluations of the 2015-2021 National Agenda for Children and Adolescents and of the Child Friendly Municipalities program were launched, and the groundwork for the evaluation of the national education exclusion strategy was established. UNICEF and the Evaluation Area of the Ministry of Planning are developing an innovative Guide to Develop Evaluations of Childhood Interventions to guarantee a standardized approach to evaluate child-focused programmes and policies. UNICEF Costa Rica participated in the assessment of the global Evaluation Learning Programme and the assessment of country-led evaluation strategies.

Although the Costa Rican government has a robust regulatory framework and plans for fulfilling the rights of the child, institutional processes and mechanisms are lacking for compliance monitoring. UNICEF supported PANI and the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CNNA) formulate and launch the Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for Policies, Laws and Information on Children and Adolescents with the evaluation criteria of sustainability, efficiency and relevance.

Knowledge Generation and Management

UNICEF is strengthening national knowledge management capacity so that existing and new mechanisms can more efficiently disseminate information and make it available to decision-makers, with a particular focus on transforming data and information to help close the gaps and social vulnerabilities that affect children and adolescents, with a strong gender and social inclusion focus.

Within this context, and in response to General Observation No. 19 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, PANI and the University of Costa Rica developed a methodology to measure public spending on children and adolescents, and it will help to identify gaps and advocate for the safeguarding of national budgets for children.

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Based on the results of earlier anthropometric studies and an analysis of the nutritional and physical activity habits of children and adolescents, UNICEF helped with the development of a strategy to use this data to develop local plans of action (in four priority municipalities) for the prevention of child obesity and which will encourage healthier lifestyles in children and adolescents through partnerships with public institutions, municipal governments, civil society, academia and the private sector.

UNICEF supported the elaboration of the ninth State of the Rights of Children and Adolescents report by the University of Costa Rica, presented in the framework of the CRC@30 celebration. The report focused on comprehensive child protection, the best interest of the child, the interrelationship between legislation and public policy, harmonization of national legislation with international agreements and gender and social inclusion. The report is an important reference during the elaboration of laws, policies, programs and strategies related to children.

U-Report was launched in partnership with the Red Cross's Youth Programme, the Guides and Scouts of Costa Rica and the Parque la Libertad Foundation, as a participatory consultation to canvas the perceptions and opinions of adolescents and youth, amplify their voices and strengthen social audit of their rights as an advocacy tool towards public policies that improve the development and protection of adolescents and youth. The first consultation revolved around climate change and there are now 283 U-Reporters, with plans already in place to broaden the base.

The preparation of the Confidential Report for the Pre-Session on Costa Rica at Committee on the Rights of the Child was an opportunity to include concrete recommendations on selected issues that UNICEF considered require special attention. The hallmark of the process was a consultation with six individual groups totaling 65 adolescents and youths ages 15 to 25 representing vulnerable groups and populations. UNICEF Costa Rica participated in the Pre-session of the CRC Committee in Geneva.

Communication and Advocacy

UNICEF fortified its strategies to include the issues of children and adolescents in public policy and mobilize different social sectors, as well as the ability to reach a combined six million people through the combined UNICEF social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram).

UNICEF's 2018 annual report, publicly presented in mid-2019, was instrumental in positioning the situation of children and adolescents as well as the programme's key actions and was disseminated by 14 communication media that highlighted childhood violence, the need to increase national child care network and the importance of promoting innovative models. Approximately 80,000 people were reached by the report on social media.

Media and digital platforms have become resources to provide useful information on the rights of children and adolescents and position central issues amongst different audiences. Information on children and adolescents presented by UNICEF and published by the press (126 releases) increased by 58% and social media followers increased by 18%, compared to 2018.

UNICEF used CRC@30 and World Children's Day (WCD) to empower children and adolescents, position their voices and draw attention to their artistic talent, including: the third annual National Children's Dance Festival, with 300 children and adolescents; a video, in partnership with the HÖPE troupe, showcasing 50 adolescent dancers to promote their rights, as well as the Invasion Urban Dance Festival with 200 adolescents; and reaching more than 62,000 people with UNICEF's social media messages.

Adolescent Development, Empowerment and Participation: Generation Unlimited

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Key outcomes of the implementation of Generation Unlimited include: (i) formulation and approval of the **2020-2024 Public Policy for Youth**, which for the first time consulted with 251 indigenous adolescents and incorporates climate change as a cross-cutting theme for all entities promoting active youth participation; (ii) design of a **Youth Ombudsperson** model creating a permanent mechanism to promote youth rights, manage and follow up on complaints and seek innovative solutions to violations of their rights; (iii) innovative GenU spinoff models, created jointly with 150 adolescents and youth from highly vulnerable groups - **Generation Courage** for the empowerment of girls (mostly indigenous and afrodescendent), **Generation Inclusion** on inclusive risk management and leadership by disabled youths and **Generation Connected** focusing on empowerment in the areas of communication, human rights and life and employability skills; and (iv) the designation of Vice President Epsy Campbell as Champion and the selection of Costa Rica as a Frontrunner and Youth 2030 Fast-track country.

During PreCOP 25 in October 2019, UNICEF Costa Rica and LACRO supported the advancement of the child rights dimension of climate change. Together with the Viceministry of Youth, UNICEF amplified the voices of youth to address climate change as active agents of change. Strong advocacy was generated by various high-level activities between youth groups and senior officials (UNFCCC Deputy Executive Director, President and Vice-President of Costa Rica, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations for Human Rights, Minister of Environment of Costa Rica, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, YOUNGO delegates, COP Champion, amongst others). The Declaration of Latin American Youth on Climate Change (drafted by 70 youth participants) conveyed a strong message to world leaders demanding climate action and public policies, including the inclusion of human rights and climate change in school curricula.

Various innovative models for the empowerment of young girls in leadership and life skills were also supported, including Generation Courage and the 3rd Nosotras: Women Connecting Forum, providing valuable spaces to strengthen women's leadership, empowerment, employability and entrepreneurship capacities through national and international networks.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Key lessons learned have been generated in four frontline areas: policy impact; innovative modeling; adolescent and youth empowerment and participation; and mainstreaming gender and communication for development. As the programme enters into the critical halfway point in 2020, country programme leadership will apply these lessons to routine programme implementation as well as to building new models.

Costa Rica is a policy-rich country, and the area of children's rights is no exception, with policies that affect the survival, development, protection and participation rights of children and adolescents. Nevertheless, this richness contrasts with worsening indicators (violence, poverty and educational exclusion, to name a few) and the seeming difficulty of the policy framework to exert changes. An example is related to the three life-cycle policies on early childhood, infancy and adolescence, developed in 2018, with limited impacts directly related to the absence of plans of action that assign roles, responsibilities and accountabilities to different national institutions (addressing the bottleneck of weak inter-institutional coordination) and civil society actors (addressing the bottleneck of passive participation at the local levels). Thus, the formulation of the 2020-2024 Public Policy for Youth with the parallel development of a plan of action represents a solution to improve policy impact and incidence.

The hallmark of the 2018-2022 country programme in an upper middle-income country such as Costa Rica is the promotion of innovative models, backed by theories of change, that can be scaled up to resolve national problems that affect the holistic development of children. There are good examples of successful models such as the Houses of Happiness (already backed by an Executive Decree), Civic Centers Without Walls and Music for Children that confirm the validity of this proof of concept, however, reaching this stage of appropriation requires addressing key challenges. Firstly, modeling from the very start requires the initial buy-in of public institutions to ensure continuity. The experience to date shows that the consolidation of models can be greatly accelerated if the generation of materials, guidelines and protocols are developed and used by counterparts during the process of upscaling. Secondly, monitoring instruments and future evaluability criteria need to be ensured from the beginning, so that incorporating baselines, developing indicators and metrics and ensuring a knowledge management system will permit for corrective actions during implementation. Thirdly, the active involvement of partner institutions during the formulation and implementation stages of the models is a critical success factor, including providing the necessary capacity building and advocacy. Finally, acknowledging from the very beginning the different

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realities at the national and local levels will guarantee designs and approaches that respond more effectively to these scenarios. Applying these lessons will be instrumental for the success of models that are at a point of inflection and takeoff, such as Listening Classrooms and its highly successful volunteer programme (educational exclusion), MERI (empowerment of indigenous women and girls), HALCOM (prevention of family separation), Judicial Mentors (life projects for at-risk youth) and REDESSAM (prevention of self-inflicted violence and suicidal ideation). Throughout this process, it is also important for UNICEF to involve non-traditional partners whose different perspectives may bring value to the process.

The country programme has grown in the area of adolescent and youth development, empowerment and participation, facilitated by the incorporation of GenU into our strategic framework and by the number of direct engagement interventions with adolescents and youth already underway. The Committee on the Rights of the Child noted that new programmes and policies designed without adolescent and youth participation will generate limited change, whilst limiting adolescent involvement in the application of the normative framework will also produce little impact. The programme's efforts to reach out to and plan, implement and evaluate with adolescents from indigenous, afrodescendent, poor and violent communities, as well as adolescents with disabilities, have produced multiple realities and perspectives that have significantly increased the reach of programme results. U-Report represents an excellent participatory platform to generate evidence with adolescents and young people. Likewise, the development of models, including their mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation, knowledge generation and theories of change, are bound to be more sustainable if influenced from the beginning with the perspectives of adolescents and youth. This implies that UNICEF must also ensure that spaces for participation are accompanied with deliberate opportunities to strengthen the skills and competencies of adolescents and youth to ensure that they too are fit for purpose to address challenges and seize opportunities and these have to be specifically incorporated into the annual planning process. Finally, it is essential to avoid a "one size fits all" approach when working with adolescents and youth and to resist the temptation to develop a standard model for direct replication, and instead promote models that are inclusive and recognize the different idiosyncrasies, needs and interests of adolescents and youth.

Costa Rica's social protection model is being challenged by a fiscal crisis, anti-human rights perspectives and difficulties to reach agreements on the critical pathway regarding children. UNICEF's work in Costa Rica mainstreaming a gender-focused approach to programming and a more rigorous use of a C4D strategy can help modify social norms that perpetuate the violation of children's rights and provide a vision for a child-centred society. To generate more impact, it is important to guarantee that not only are programme counterparts well skilled and trained in these areas but that UNICEF staff possess advanced competencies to help lead the way forward. Monitoring and evaluation systems that are sensitive enough to measure changes in attitudes and behavior are needed.

Looking forward to 2020, UNICEF is well positioned and increasingly fit for purpose to support government institutions, civil society, the private sector, academia, society at large and children and adolescents themselves to advance a paradigm shift which is necessary and urgent to promote in Costa Rica as far as the child rights agenda is concerned. These lessons will be proactively applied to the 2020 annual work-planning exercise which could be amplified through the implementation of quality control and oversight actions from the Regional Office, for example, sectoral peer reviews and programme audits.