

## Costa Rica

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### Executive Summary

The third year of the current Programme of Cooperation with Costa Rica evidenced important public policy and advocacy gains for children and adolescents, highlighted critical institutional capacity constraints and emerging problems and underscored the challenges of a small office operating in an upper-middle-income country context. The Government's strong focus on social issues has at times been overshadowed by deepening fiscal and economic constraints; however, this has not impeded recognition of the need to urgently address the structural causes of increasing levels of inequality, which mostly affect children and adolescents in impoverished coastal communities and from indigenous and afro-descendant populations.

UNICEF has continued to play a key role in strengthening the impact and incidence of social programmes oriented to children, both at national and sub-national levels, buttressed by focused knowledge generation, advocacy, social mobilisation and partnership-building strategies, which have resulted in four outstanding achievements. (i) The launch of the forward-looking National Agenda for Children and Adolescents (ANNA), which proposes the required commitments required to sustain, over the next five years, previous achievements. This was complemented by a comprehensive review of the national protection system, recommendations from which are expected to generate significant transformations. (ii) Inequities in education achieved national focus through the development of a strategy to combat exclusion through a focus on early childhood and secondary level education in close to 200 schools with the lowest enrolment rates and proactive communication for development. This was strengthened by the strong political positioning of the early childhood development (ECD) agenda and the decision to elaborate a national ECD policy aiming for universal coverage, the elaboration of which is led by a high-level commission. (iii) The launch of the VIII Report on the Situation of Children and Adolescents (EDNA), under a 15-year-old collaboration with the University of Costa Rica, reconfirmed UNICEF's lead role in knowledge management. (iv) The significant increase in reach and engagement through social media platforms (300 per cent increase in fans).

These achievements took place against the backdrop of four shortfalls and constraints: (i) The growing incidence of violence against children has garnered national attention, yet the country still does not have an overarching child-focused policy to combat this phenomenon through integrated and inter-sectoral national and local interventions. Of particular concern is the increase in cases of domestic abuse and violence against children under the age of five years. (ii) The deterioration of trends in indicators related to child poverty, secondary enrolment, child obesity, adolescent pregnancy and the participation of adolescents in illicit activities have underscored the limitations of existing social policies to address them. This deterioration is not only related to the impact of the fiscal crisis on social development programmes, but also to issues of efficiency, effectiveness and impact. (iii) The Cuban migrant crisis highlighted issues of institutional articulation and coordination and, more broadly, the fact that migration is increasingly becoming a fundamental concern to the Central American region. (iv) Internally, staffing shortfalls (in education, protection and operations) curtailed the Country Offices' ability to fully respond to all annual commitments with counterparts. However, together with the audit

and small office simplification exercise, UNICEF is in a good position to implement changes in 2016 that will release staff to focus on programme results.

Four important partnerships can be highlighted: (i) Stronger articulation in the formulation of national and sub-national policies for children with the most important government institutions, with strong recognition of UNICEF's role, and the certification of 32 child-friendly municipalities, which will be instrumental in cementing the sub-national protection system. (ii) The innovative Houses of Happiness initiative that coalesced farmers, national institutions and sub-national governments in the development of protection and development programmes for indigenous children working in the coffee harvest. (iii) The decision by the Ministry of Public Education to involve UNICEF as the lead international partner in the design, implementation and evaluation of its flagship programmes related to education exclusion, early childhood development and violence in schools. (iv) Partnership building with the private sector moved quickly by focusing on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Business Principles and Child Rights strategies in high-profile companies.

These achievements and partnerships will continue in 2016, by engaging with national and sub-national counterparts in an exercise to further focus and streamline UNICEF's comparative advantages and strategic role in an upper-middle-income country. Innovations will be pursued with an emphasis on using their results and lessons learned to influence existing and future policies to generate greater equity-enhancing opportunities for children and adolescents.

## Humanitarian Assistance

At the time this report was prepared, UNICEF and the Country Team (UNCT) were busy activating support mechanisms for the protection of Cuban migrants stranded on the northern border with Nicaragua. Since early November 2015, the immigration authorities of Costa Rica identified an increase in the number of Cubans leaving the island with the intention of reaching the United States for the purpose of taking advantage of the Cuban Adjustment Act. As a result of the refusal of various Central American countries to allow the migrants to pass through their borders, the number of migrants has remained in constant growth, reaching nearly 5,000 people, of which 80 per cent were living in mostly overcrowded shelters. Amongst this population, there was a group of about 200 children and adolescents. Within the framework of coordination with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UNCT, UNICEF Costa Rica contributed support to the National Commission on Risk Prevention and Emergency Care (CNE), working directly with government and civil society partners to improve their interventions by: a) reducing overcrowding; b) improving health and sanitation conditions; c) strengthening data and profiling of the migrant population; and d) promoting minimum standards for the protection of children, adolescents and women in shelters. While supporting the activities of the National Child Welfare Institute (PANI) in the shelters, UNICEF Costa Rica focused on the area of psychosocial support for the migrant children, adolescents and women through the application of the "Retorno a la alegría" - "Return to happiness" methodology, in coordination with the Red Cross and the Secretariat of Mental Health within the Ministry of Public Health (MSP). While the Cuban migrant situation is not classified as a humanitarian crisis, the Government eventually admitted that the CNE had exceeded its logistical and financial capacity to assist the migrants, and thus officially requested cooperation. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) was deployed and coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established for the purpose of responding to this request; subsequently a contingency plan was also developed. Due to the lack of a political solution and the conditions faced by the migrants, there is a concern that their number may increase; for this reason, emergency management mechanisms have been activated and prioritised by the UN

System (UNS). For UNICEF Costa Rica, this situation represented a great challenge since it does not have adequate human resources specialised in dealing with emergencies on a large scale if needed; for this reason, an ongoing dialogue with the Regional Office was initiated to access technical expertise and, if required, financial resources.

### Mid-term Review of the Strategic Plan

UNICEF Costa Rica continues to fulfil the 'core business of UNICEF' in the Latin America and Caribbean region (LAC), aimed at monitoring the situation of children in all its aspects, as well as in monitoring the implementation of recommendations of the CRC and CEDAW. Such role is crucial in all countries, including upper-middle income countries such as Costa Rica, as well as in high-income countries, re-confirming the universal mandate of UNICEF. Moreover, a substantial part of UNICEF-supported actions aim at influencing (sub-) national policies and programmes. This work is complemented with the implementation of model initiatives at the sub-national level, particularly in selected areas where the most disadvantaged populations are living. Further emphasis on the combination of 'upstream' policy work together with sub-national level modelling, also in the context of middle income countries, allows for continuous learning and obtaining evidence from local experiences that could be used to design and strengthen national policies and programmes.

Increasingly, UNICEF's programmatic role is evolving and addressing emerging issues that affect the rights of girls, boys and adolescents. Such issues, which are currently not fully mentioned in the Strategic Plan, include: a) Emerging health agenda - health systems strengthening, non-communicable diseases, obesity, adolescent health; b) integrated early childhood development; c) secondary education, within LAC the particular attention to 'boys education', given their high drop-out rates in secondary education, as well as sustained attention to enhancing inter-cultural (bilingual) education; and d) prevention of adolescent pregnancy and linking such efforts with addressing (sexual) violence against girls. It was suggested that these areas be better reflected in the Strategic Plan, through specific results and indicators. Moreover, it was suggested to review the programme information data base system coding so that such emerging programme issues are adequately reflected. This will also allow for better reporting on results and funds spent.

Several programmes have identified, as part of the analysis of barriers and bottlenecks, the need to address social norms and therefore include a component of behavioural change communication (C4D). This is currently not a specific strategy in the Strategic Plan and it was suggested to reconsider reintroducing this strategy as one of UNICEF's corporate strategies. This will also allow better reflection and reporting on the type of work ongoing using C4D approaches. At the same time, a significant amount of South-South cooperation (SSC) is ongoing with other countries in the region, and beyond. Based on the 2030 Agenda and the evolving changes in the aid environment it is expected that the application of this strategy will only continue to increase. However, so far it has been difficult to demonstrate UNICEF's value-added to obtaining specific results for children through SSC. Therefore, it was recommended to continue with efforts, also as part of the MTR of the Strategic Plan, to provide global tools for measuring the results of SSC. Linked to SSC is also the need to strengthen our knowledge management function. Although efforts are made at Country Office level, it is also recommended to increase global efforts to strengthen the knowledge management function. This could also include increased emphasis on supporting evaluation of (sub-) national policies and programmes rather than focusing on UNICEF programmes only. With limited resources available, a shift in attention to the type of evaluations expected is suggested. Finally, many country programmes in LAC are facing resource constraints, and while income from private

fundraising and partnerships has been growing, and increasingly such resources are re-distributed in the region through the Regional Thematic Fund, many Country Offices remain highly dependent on income from Regional and Global Thematic Funds and Global Set-Aside funding (in addition to Regular Resource allocation). With such income, UNICEF is still in the position to deliver on substantive results and to exercise its mandate by addressing the persisting inequities in LAC countries. Therefore, as part of discussions of a potential new resource allocation system for UNICEF, it is strongly suggested to ensure that the current minimum levels of Regular Resources are maintained, while at the same time adjustments could be made to criteria for allocation of global set-aside and thematic funds, re-orienting more of such resources to 'donor-orphan' regions, such as Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Summary Notes and Acronyms

AMP-Annual management plan  
ANNA- National Agenda for Children and Adolescents  
CACIA- Chamber of Food Industry  
CAI- Child-friendly municipalities  
CCSS – Costa Rican Social Security System  
CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women  
CEN CINAI- Child nutritional and educational centres  
CEPRENAC- Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America  
CINDE- Coalition for Development Initiatives  
CMT-Country management team  
CNE-National Commission of Risk Prevention and Emergency Care  
CNNA- National Council of Childhood and Adolescence  
CPAP-Country Programme Action Plan  
CPD-Country programme document  
CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child  
C4D-Communication for development  
DCT -Direct Cash Transfers  
DGME-National Bureau of Migration  
ECD-Early child development  
EDNA- Report on the Situation of Children and Adolescent Rights  
EPA- EPA supermarkets  
ERM-Enterprise Risk Management  
FAMA-Families in Action  
GSSC-Global Shared Services Centre  
HACT-Harmonised approach to cash transfers  
HCT-Humanitarian Country Team  
HIV/AIDS - Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome  
IANWGE – Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender  
ICE- National Electricity and Telecommunications Provider  
IFAM- Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance  
IMAS-National Institute for Social Care  
INEC-National Institute of Statistics and Census  
IOM -International Organisation for Migration  
LAC – Latin America and the Caribbean  
M&E-Monitoring and evaluation  
MEP-Ministry of Public Education  
MIDEPLAN-Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy  
MOSS-Minimal operational security standards

MSP – Ministry of Public Health  
OCHA- Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
OR-Other Resources  
PANI-National Child Welfare Institute  
PCHSF- Joint Programme of the Human Security Trust Fund  
RO-Regional Office  
RR-Regular Resources  
SINEM- National music education system  
SLP- Local child protection sub-systems  
SNPI- National child protection system  
SSC - South-South cooperation  
UCR-University of Costa Rica  
UNA- National University of Costa Rica  
UNCT-United Nations Country Team  
UNDP-United Nations Development Programme  
UNFPA-United Nations Population Fund  
UNHCR-United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
UNICEF-United Nations Children's Fund  
UNS-United Nations System

## Capacity Development

Strengthening capacities at the institutional and community levels represents a main focus of the Country Programme. UNICEF, together with the National University (UNA), proposed a new operational structure for the national child protection system (SNPI) to the National Council of Childhood and Adolescence (CNNA), which aims to strengthen the local capacities of CNNA management and institutions. This was followed with the creation of a high-level commission that will be evaluating implementation mechanisms in 2016. UNICEF has strengthened the capacity of PANI in various areas so that it undertakes a more holistic approach focused on advocacy, education and violence-prevention from a life-cycle perspective. To this effect, PANI strengthened its skills in institutional planning, new programme development and overall improvement of services. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) to reorient its strategy for addressing the issue of children out-of-school, enabling a transition towards a strategy aimed at addressing educational exclusion, starting at the preschool level. Research skills, communication, planning and methods for addressing exclusion were strengthened.

The Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance (IFAM), PANI and UNICEF contributed to capacity and skill building sessions of local governments through the Child-Friendly Municipalities strategy, whereby 32 of the 81 municipalities developed initiatives to promote the rights of children and adolescents, enabling their certification as child-friendly places. Evidence-generation has not only allowed institutional capacity improvement but also effective positioning of results and the development of strategies to address identified bottlenecks. Successful examples include the MEP study on school exclusion; studies on the situation of children at the cantonal level, which were developed by the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN); the Ministry of Finance's regional study on investment in early childhood; and research carried out by the municipalities.

## Evidence Generation, Policy Dialogue and Advocacy

UNICEF Costa Rica invested significant efforts in strengthening evidence-generation to directly influence public policy and to encourage debate and advocacy on key issues affecting children and adolescents. In collaboration with the University of Costa Rica, the 8th Report on the

Situation of Child and Adolescent Rights was developed, underscoring the progress and challenges that the country has seen since ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). MIDEPLAN developed two research studies. The first study was related to the welfare of children and adolescents in child-friendly municipalities and was influential in the local analysis of the situation of children and adolescents. The second study, entitled "Children and Adolescents: Their Prospects", contributed to the situation analysis component for supporting the formulation of public policies and decision making, specifically the National Agenda for Children and Adolescents. These studies provided inputs to local governments to help strengthen their capabilities and develop more assertive policies and actions benefiting children. The study "Exclusion in the Costa Rica Public Education System," which was jointly developed with MEP, was used as a baseline for the launch of a national strategy to combat school exclusion, "I'm All In." Technical assistance to generate information on issues related to violence was also provided to measure incidence in terms of geography, to determine which municipalities should be a priority for intervention and for the development of institutional strategies. The information generated was also used by the Ombudsman to define and implement its strategy in the three municipalities with the highest levels of violence, and represents an important input for the high-level committee charged with the elaboration of the National Plan Against Violence.

## Partnerships

UNICEF strengthened various partnerships and promoted collaboration between sectors. At the government level, the partnership with MEP was strengthened; technical assistance was provided for the development and implementation of the national strategy "I'm All In" to combat exclusion; ECD was encouraged; the promotion of safe and strong schools was promoted; and key partnerships with the private sector were established. The PANI "Families in Action (FAMA) Child Care Academy programme, which seeks to create a network of local families to prevent domestic violence, was strengthened. In partnership with MEP, the National Music Education System (SINEM) and the supermarket chain EPA, a fundraising campaign was initiated, whereby customers donated funds for the "Música para la niñez" (Music for Children) programme to promote musical education for 22,000 children under the age of six years and who attend the Child Nutritional and Educational Centres (CEN CINAI) across the country. In addition to the child-friendly municipalities (CAI), UNICEF continued to intensify its work with local governments. Events that raised awareness on violence prevention were held in 32 municipalities, training was provided to adolescents, advocacy was sustained and local policies focused on children and human rights were developed, in addition to coordinating protection networks. Together with 10 local NGOs, a presentation was delivered to the Government and national news media about the results of the "Tu Voz Vale" (Your Voice Counts) survey, in which more than 9,227 adolescents from across the country participated. Within the private sector, awareness was maintained around UNICEF's Business Principles and Children's Rights, emphasising implementation of the principles and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The Regional Office identified this experience as a best practice. Also, a conference on corporate social responsibility was organised with the participation of more than 30 companies. Partnerships with the private sector will be emphasised in 2016.

## External Communication and Public Advocacy

UNICEF advocacy efforts focused on equality, MDGs, education, violence and excluded populations, whilst simultaneously emphasising strategies such as knowledge generation through social networks and the use of teaching and learning materials for community work. UNICEF increased its presence in social networks, resulting in a growth of followers by 300 per cent to 24,900 and of reach from 8,300 to 23,000. The median engagement was 23,000 while 56,400 website visitors represented a 62 per cent increase. There were 9,300 Twitter followers.

The website and Facebook page of the CAI programme witnessed a 900 per cent follower increase. The global report "A Fair Chance for Every Child" and the 8th Report on the Situation of Children's and Adolescents' Rights were disseminated, especially through the graphic visualisation of the progress and challenges related to children's rights. MEP campaigns promoted staying in school, returning to school and academic development: "I'm All In With Education" and "Dare to Study", focusing on exclusion and "Pre-school: The First Step Before Flight", advocating for a 100 per cent pre-school enrolment rate. The Minister of Education participated in the Global Business Coalition for Education to support the regional campaign "Strong and Safe Schools. The Ombudsman, PANI and UNICEF supported the "If You Keep Quiet You Allow It to Happen" movement, part of a national rally to prevent violence against children, with over 3,000 participants. The campaign "An End to Violence" was disseminated via news media and social networks, reaching more than 190,000 followers and an engagement of 41,000, thus facilitating the inclusion of this issue in the ANNA report. Additionally, the "Red de Familias en Acción" (Family Networks in Action) methodology on domestic violence prevention was disseminated. The survey "Your Voice Counts" involved 9,226 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 21; the results were presented to the National Youth Council.

### **South-South Cooperation and Triangular Cooperation**

Together with MIDEPLAN, UNICEF Costa Rica developed a Technical Cooperation Catalogue focusing on topics related to children and adolescents, which provides information about the capacities of Government and autonomous institutions, public agencies and the academic sector. These capacities are related to programmes, experience and initiatives with the likely potential to develop South-South and triangular cooperation projects under different modalities, thereby enhancing skills and best practices in the country on this cooperation strategy. MIDEPLAN is currently finalising the development of a Web platform that will allow more opportunities for information exchange starting in 2016. An exchange between public education officials from Costa Rica and Uruguay was facilitated, so that a community teachers programme can be successfully adapted to the context of Costa Rica. This programme was a success in Uruguay and is already being adapted through exchanges between experts from both countries. A proposal was formulated to fully implement the programme in Costa Rica starting in 2016. There is strong interest by the Government of Costa Rica in engaging more in South-South and triangular cooperation modalities, not only to export its wealth of knowledge on social development, but to also learn from other countries in the region that could share their expertise with Costa Rica, especially on emerging issues such as violence prevention and early childhood development.

### **Identification and Promotion of Innovation**

MEP and UNICEF Costa Rica promoted the "Create, Discover and Share" nationwide contest, which showcased 68 innovative educational experiences developed by teachers from preschool, primary and secondary institutions promoting the use of digital technologies to improve the learning process. Moreover, UNICEF supported the development of interactive tools to strengthen the coping skills of teachers, students and school staff as they implement protocols to handle violence at school. UNICEF supported the judiciary's initiative - "Empower Yourself" - a mobile application that facilitates access for adolescents and their families to the justice system. The app covers duties and responsibilities of adolescents, sexual violence, maternity and paternity, child abuse, and substance addiction. The aforementioned innovations are tools that maximise new technologies by providing crucial information to students, teachers and families. Since 2013, the MEP mobile app has been downloaded 33,306 times. The most active topics within this app are the "Teacher at Home" and secondary education practice tests. "Empower Yourself" has been downloaded by adolescents 3,000 times (61 per cent by those

aged 16 to 18; 21 per cent by those between 14 and 16 years of age; and 8 per cent by those between 12 and 14 years old). Fifty-seven per cent were male users and 43 per cent female; 86 per cent were enrolled in school while 14 per cent were not. In late 2014, a feasibility study was conducted to promote a laboratory that would facilitate the development of an operational project of innovation with key actors and stakeholders. The study recommended that the lab should focus on education and early childhood, and suggested a number of partners for the project. In 2016, the feasibility of establishing the lab will be evaluated.

### **Support to Integration and cross-sectoral linkages**

UNICEF Costa Rica actively supports cross-sectoral and institutional coordination. Efforts have concentrated on providing technical assistance to processes aimed at improving programmatic governance in the fields of childhood and adolescence. For several years, major deficiencies have been identified within the SNPI, especially at the local coordination level, leading to a comprehensive review of the SNPI and resulting in a proposal presented to CNNA for the improvement of inter- and intra-institutional coordination processes. UNICEF Costa Rica strengthened the role and involvement of local governments in programmatic issues related to children and adolescents, and thus promoted a partnership between PANI and IFAM on the topic of Local Child Protection Sub-Systems (SLP), an effort which has facilitated the development of joint actions at the community level. Through the ANNA report, conditions for improved coordinated action on children and adolescents were generated through the definition of cross-sectoral work focused on traditionally marginalised populations. UNICEF Costa Rica provided technical assistance throughout the process and is currently working with the institutions to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework that will strengthen transparency and accountability. Within the realm of education and efforts to end school exclusion, UNICEF Costa Rica encouraged improved coordination mechanisms between MEP, PANI, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), the National Institute for Social Care (IMAS) and the Child Care Network to address the dimensions of exclusion from a cross-sectoral perspective, and not just from the educational sector. The bi-national Joint Programme of the Human Security Trust Fund (PCHSF) to benefit indigenous migrants is another example of a project that links social welfare institutions and the health sector, along with agencies dedicated to specialised care and integral development as well as municipal and migration stakeholders. This collaboration generated high-impact strategies that are still sustainable long after the intervention by UNICEF Costa Rica.

### **Service Delivery**

UNICEF Costa Rica focuses its programme objectives and strategies on strengthening institutional capacities of the different sectors related to children and adolescents and the generation of evidence and knowledge required to promote public policies aimed at reducing inequalities and inequities they face. Therefore, UNICEF does support service delivery per se, but rather, in line with middle-income country programming, focuses on providing technical assistance to identify, and respond to, the main bottlenecks that limit coverage and quality in institutional services. From this perspective, UNICEF Costa Rica's actions stem from an analysis of the sustainability of the role of the state to fully implement the programmes for children and adolescents that have been developed. An example of this approach is the national strategy to combat school exclusion, wherein the MEP assumes responsibility for delivering services and acquiring the required supplies. Similarly, UNICEF supports PANI's efforts to remove barriers that hinder the modification of management styles and the application of strategic changes to the institutional approach. Another example is the "Casas de la Alegría" - "Houses of Happiness" - programme, which establishes centres of comprehensive care for children of indigenous migrants who work in seasonal coffee farms. In this case, UNICEF has

enhanced the capacity of institutions involved in the programme. Within the framework of the Public Service Health Care Plan, UNICEF provided initial funding for the installation of the first six Houses of Happiness in 2014, followed, in 2015, by an additional 16 houses financed by the national budget. Under this arrangement, IMAS authorised the payment of subsidies to extremely poor families while the MSP opted for more flexible administrative processes so that this type of programme could work. UNICEF actions complemented the strategic contributions of the Costa Rica Social Security System (CCSS), National Bureau of Migration (DGM)E, CEN-CINAI, the Municipality of Coto Brus, and PANI.

### Human Rights-Based Approach to Cooperation

UNICEF permanently advocated with national partners to ensure compliance with the recommendations of the CRC and the CEDAW committees made to Costa Rica, some of which were detailed in previous annual reports. Within the PCHSF framework, UNICEF developed a care model for Ngäbe-Bugle indigenous children accompanying their families in seasonal coffee harvesting migrations that occur on the southern border. Together with the Civil Registry and UNHCR, the births of 50 indigenous children and adolescents were duly registered, most of whom were born in the country to foreign parents. These families live on coffee farms, and do not register the births of their children for fear of deportation, caused by misinformation and lack of familiarity with national laws. Regarding the special needs of people with disabilities, in partnership with the Coordination Centre for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC) and with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, UNICEF was able to position the issue on the regional risk management agenda. In the absence of Central American norms and regulations on this issue, a proposal was formulated to strengthen the inclusion, protection and care of the disabled by public institutions and humanitarian organisations during emergencies. In the case of Costa Rica, this project served to influence the decision to elaborate a legislative initiative to protect the rights of people with disabilities during disasters. MEP supported the implementation of a strategy to combat educational exclusion and to underscore the importance of early childhood education in regions with low levels of coverage. This effort responds to the need to guarantee the right to education for highly excluded populations. Thirty-two municipalities were recognised as child-friendly, but 12 of these reported the lowest rates of child welfare and seven were amongst the most violent in the country.

### Gender Mainstreaming and Equality

Although UNICEF Costa Rica does not have a fulltime specialist on gender issues, important initiatives were undertaken through the designation of the protection officer as gender focal point, with the support of education and M&E staff. The guidelines of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender (IANWGE) and the Secretary General's UNiTE campaign were communicated through posters displayed at the UNICEF/UN offices in the country. Twenty-two UNS staff members were trained in mainstreaming a gender perspective with a focus on masculinity and defining gender indicators with men in mind. UNICEF Costa Rica promoted the analysis of gender-based violence from the perspective of families and child-rearing. In collaboration with PANI, UNICEF helped to develop the Families in Action programme, which forms part of a vision of responsibility for the upbringing and education of children, in which parents and caregivers are encouraged to become involved in the training processes. The programme aims to prevent domestic violence by promoting parental involvement and encouraging a change in traditional roles. Education for adolescent mothers programmes aimed at prevention of adolescent pregnancy were promoted by the MSP. It is important to note that UNICEF is aware of the need to strengthen its capacities on gender issues, which will be one of the topics reviewed by the Country Management Team (CMT) in 2016.

## Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has been promoted in two ways: within UNICEF and through work with strategic partners from the business sector. Internally, the Country Office participates in an inter-agency initiative of recycling traditional and electronic items. Printing and paper waste are being minimised, while recycling and the use of digital technologies for the dissemination of materials are being prioritised, which has resulted in an estimated reduction in printing by 75 per cent. In terms of energy expenditure, staff awareness about turning off the lights in the office led to a reduction of 23 per cent on the total cost of electricity use. Additionally, obsolete electronic equipment is being taken to a facility that specialises in the recycling of technological hardware. Under the CAI programme, 14 per cent of municipalities supported environmental sustainability initiatives in the areas of advocacy, training, green recreational spaces and recycling in schools.

The MEP mobile application, developed with UNICEF support, was nominated for the "Smart and Green Costa Rica" award. This tool allows a significant reduction in paper use by digitising academic materials used in the classroom. Four partner companies have implemented the Business Principles and Children's Rights Framework, which includes an evaluation report according to Business Principle #7 (Respect and Promote the Rights of the Child with regards to Facilities and the Acquisition and Use of Land), which they used to measure their environmental practices that impact children. Mention should also be made of the participation in this process by the supermarket chain AutoMercado and the national power and telecommunications authority (ICE).

## Effective Leadership

As part of the 2014 audit recommendations, an action plan for monitoring the eight observations received was implemented. To date, six observations were completed, and two remain open, addressing compliance with the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) and updating the purchase value of two official vehicles in the VISION system. Both recommendations are being implemented and will be included on the audit report to be sent in January 2016. The CMT monitors indicators for programmes and operations in the Manager's Dashboard, and AMP implementation is reviewed twice, during the middle and at the end of year. The CMT also monitors compliance with performance reviews of staff members within the prescribed period, as well as other statutory requirements. During 2015, CMT terms of reference were prepared, and the meeting minutes were reviewed and signed by all members; in compliance with an audit recommendation. In relation to contracts and procurement, the audit recommendation led to revising the threshold for the Contracts Review Committee from US\$50,000 to US\$30,000; however, this is being reviewed as part of the simplification exercise in smaller, lower-risk offices. This particular exercise was quite valuable as it identified several areas that could be streamlined and/or simplified with the objective of allowing staff to focus on the core business of UNICEF. The CMT will review these recommendations in early 2016. Enterprise Resource Management was updated this year; all risks were monitored by the CMT and the relevant actions for five of the seven identified risks were managed internally, to minimise their impact. The CMT has given priority to the implementation of the action plan to meet the priorities of the Global Staff Survey 2014, which confirmed that the Country Office is doing very well in all of the measured dimensions.

## Financial Resources Management

The sound and regular management of financial resources is one of the key management processes of UNICEF in Costa Rica, and takes place both in meetings of the programme coordination team and of the CMT. Planning of financial resources in 2015 was based on the

achievement of programmatic and operational objectives during the previous year, as well as on the need to implement new and emerging priorities. Institutional rules and procedures are carefully adhered to, ensuring proper use, control and spending of regular and other resources allocated to the Office. The CMT also monitors the monthly budget, all contributions (grants) and the settlement of direct cash transfers (DCT) to counterparts, ensuring that the Office does not have DCTs greater than six months. With regard to efficiency gains, UNICEF Costa Rica decreased electricity costs by 23 per cent and monthly rental costs by 25 per cent through an agreement with the property manager, which also involves UNDP and UNFPA as co-tenants. This had a positive impact on the planned budget for 2015 since a five per cent increase in rent payments will not take place until 2016. The use of funds for the current year was 87 per cent for regular resources (RR) and 68 per cent for other resources (OR), with the remaining funds allocated for 2016. As part of the Global Shared Services Centre (GSSC), bank reconciliations of the Country Office are completed by the hub.

### **Fund-raising and Donor Relations**

As an upper-middle-income country, Costa Rica falls under the category of “donor orphans” in the region and therefore relies almost entirely on RR, OR and regional thematic funds for programme implementation. UNICEF Costa Rica’s fundraising and resource leveraging strategy promotes greater economic investment by institutional partners and private sector involvement in children’s issues, which in 2015 included work with the private sector to promote long-term strategic partnerships. More than 100 companies were approached, of which supermarket chain AutoMercado and Lego Education completed implementation of the Business Principles for Children’s Rights. More than 50 companies participated in a workshop to raise awareness about Business Principles and Children’s Rights. Two institutions supported the Music for Children programme: home improvement and hardware chain EPA, whose customers donated upwards of US\$50,000, and Western Union, which is committed to donate US\$15,000 in 2016.

As part of the presentation of the study on Childhood Obesity in Latin America, a partnership with the Chamber of Food Industry (CACIA) is being explored.

The Coalition for Development Initiatives (CINDE) and UNICEF signed an agreement to mobilise, along with MEP, private sector funds for education, early childhood and innovation. The “Houses of Happiness” programme, which serves 400 Ngäbe-Bugle indigenous children, was funded through public-private partnerships that helped to mobilise US\$410,000 from IMAS, US\$23,000 from the National Bureau of Immigration and Foreign Affairs, and close to US\$48,000 from 15 coffee farm owners, who provided land for the construction of the Houses of Happiness. Additionally, 12 municipalities managed to involve the business sector in the implementation of the CAI programme. In 2016, UNICEF Costa Rica will benefit from the support of a sub-regional Corporate Fund-Raising Specialist.

### **Evaluation**

During 2015, the review and evaluation of the AVANCEMOS cash transfer programme was completed. The programme now covers close to 180,000 beneficiaries. This IMAS-supported programme aims to reduce school dropout and desertion rates. The evaluation yielded two important inputs for IMAS. The first is the report itself, which contains a number of strategic findings and recommendations with regard to the obstacles faced by the programme, and measures to overcome them; the second is an action plan that defines short- and medium-term objectives for achieving greater incidence and efficiency. IMAS heeded the recommendations and formed a working committee to carry them out.

## Efficiency Gains and Cost Savings

UNICEF Costa Rica's CMT worked to identify strategies to maximise the resources allocated to the Office in 2015, and as a result achieved a 23 per cent reduction in electricity use.

Furthermore, negotiations with the building owner in 2014 resulted in a 25 per cent reduction in rent payments, which positively affected the budget in 2015, as the decrease remained in effect and the 5 per cent increase is not scheduled until 2016. Spending on equipment and supplies remained similar to 2014, but a two per cent reduction in travel expenses was reported, due in part to the gap of several months between outgoing and incoming Representatives. The year-long vacancy of an administrative assistant post contributed to a 19 per cent decline in payroll spending.

## Supply Management

UNICEF Costa Rica does not manage a warehouse and as an upper-middle-income country with little support provided to national service delivery mechanisms, the supply component is consequently minimal.

The total amount of supplies procured in 2015 was US\$404,859, of which programme supplies represented US\$11,205, operations supplies amounted to US\$14,047 and services represented US\$379,607.

## Security for Staff and Premises

The UNICEF Costa Rica Country Office meets minimal operational security standards (MOSS) criteria, and current safety levels in the country do not warrant the implementation of additional measures in relation to the safety of staff and physical security. However, as part of an upgrade of the emergency contact and response system, two satellite phones were purchased and tested for proper use every two months. At the UNCT level, emergency drills for the Representatives were conducted. UNICEF staff telephone drills were not scheduled this year. A portion of the funds requested from Headquarters for improvement to the smoke detection systems were not used because this was not coordinated between agencies and the property owner; however, funds will be requested to change detectors in the Country Office in 2016.

## Human Resources

UNICEF Costa Rica worked closely in 2016 with the Panama hub and the GSSC on a variety of human resources processes. Coordination with the hub was agile and efficient; however, coordination with the GSSC has been problematic due to late payments and issues using the MyCase tool, which have been reported. In 2016, the service-level agreement will clarify the division of responsibilities between regional and country offices in relation to HR services. Due to a reduction of operations staff and a decision to postpone the recruitment for the post of Administrative Assistant, the Operations section was overworked. Nonetheless, recruitment for this post has begun, and is expected to close in the first quarter of 2016, improving the distribution of work in this area. Moreover, the Country Office saw its staff reduced in the fourth quarter, with the resignation of a former senior programme assistant and the abolition of another SPA position. Recruiting for the two vacant SPA posts in the areas of protection and education began in 2015 and is expected to conclude in December so that the new hires can join staff by February 2016. The CMT tracked performance of staff performance assessments; all milestones were completed on time. The activities stated in the training plan were coordinated in conjunction with the Staff Association, and have eased the flow of information and incorporation

of staff criteria in decision-making. The staff completed training in ethics, strategic planning, project management and advocacy; first aid training is scheduled for 2016. During the Office retreat planned for March 2016, the action plan of the Global Staff Survey will be reviewed and updated. A post allocated to OR was financed through RR funds, representing a three per cent expense.

## Effective Use of Information and Communication Technology

Support for cloud services was maintained in accordance with the organisational standard and through tools such as Microsoft Lync to improve communication and resource savings in telephone calls and OneDrive for storage and portability. This allowed the UNICEF to work with less hardware, yielding medium-term savings. The use of tools and apps developed in the previous year was monitored and evaluated, including support given to MEP and the Judiciary. It is important to emphasise the use of Open Source tools used to develop these apps; these free-licence software technologies allowed the Country Office to obtain more affordable quotes from vendors, thereby increasing the scope of requirements and maximising resources. Support was given to the communications area with the dissemination and publication in social networks and on the Web with information about news, job vacancies, etc. This is a trend that extends reach and lowers administrative costs, since the Country Office prioritises the use of digital media with greater national and international coverage. As a follow-up to the transition to an office with less complex infrastructure, the "Light" implementation process was concluded, and staff have a better understanding of cloud tools, thanks to the training and daily use of Office 365. Additionally, five new computer systems were acquired to reach 70 per cent coverage of the desired infrastructure, thus achieving the goal of not using local servers. Operating costs were reduced by removing servers and eliminating other costs, and will continue to decrease in the medium and long term, thanks to the transition to Light. The Country Office is compliant with the new online bandwidth calculator.

## Programme Components from Results Assessment Module

### ANALYSIS BY OUTCOME AND OUTPUT RESULTS

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

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In 2015 the student dropout rate grew by 19 per cent compared to 2014, mainly in secondary schools. For this reason, MEP, with the support of UNICEF, promoted the national strategy "I'm All In." During the second half of the year, it launched the "Dare to Study" campaign, which aims to ensure that children and adolescents return to the classroom. Also, as a means to combat school exclusion, MEP made a commitment to provide universal access to preschool and prioritise actions aimed at early childhood development.

*School Exclusion:* "I'm All In" aims to achieve continuity, reintegration and academic success for adolescents. Instead of focusing solely on dropout rates, which makes students responsible, this strategy focuses on a more comprehensive concept, which is educational exclusion. Implementation has begun, focusing on 196 secondary schools located in 75 priority districts. These districts have higher rates of incomplete secondary education and greater student populations between the ages of 12 and 17, who tend to come from households with lower levels of education. The scope is 112,170 students, representing 27.7 per cent of all secondary schools and areas where 44.9 per cent of the total exclusion is concentrated.

*Research:* UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO, jointly with the MEP, completed a study of Educational Exclusion in Costa Rica's Public School System, a five-dimensional analysis. The study's two objectives were to identify factors causing school abandonment or preventing adolescents from continuing their education and to promote analysis of strategies and policies to remove institutional barriers that cause exclusion. The study was used as an input for the development of the "I'm All In" Strategy.

*School Violence:* Although the "Convivir" (Living Together) programme has reached 75 per cent of schools nationwide, there are still shortcomings with regard to how to address the different forms of violence and to really understand their impact on children's overall development and cognitive processes. UNICEF provided technical assistance for the reformulation and improvement of national protocols to handle school violence, and for the development of monitoring tools for the Living Together programme. The monitoring and evaluation tools were validated with the help of public school teachers.

National protocols were submitted to MEP officials and are now in the process of academic evaluation for public presentation in 2016. Nonetheless, the Bullying Response Protocol was presented in advance in 2015 because two of the three complaints filed by students to the MEP Comptroller are related to this phenomenon. The protocol was accompanied by an instructional video and posters describing the steps necessary to resolve a harassment situation.

*Early Childhood Development:* Advocacy was conducted at the highest political level of the MEP to highlight the educational, cognitive and socioeconomic reasons why early childhood education is fundamental to the development of a country. A significant achievement in this regard was the political commitment by the Minister of Public Education to early childhood education, demonstrated by actions to achieve universal preschool education from 4.3 years on, and regaining a stewardship role in the education of children between three and four years. Historically, the MEP has not defined its role in relation to education for children under 5.3 years; the net enrolment rate for the transition year (5.3 years) is 86.9 per cent while the rate for the Interactive II period (at 4.3 years) is just 60.7 per cent. Furthermore, preschool education reform did not include the importance issue of education for children between 0-4 years.

This has allowed the country to advance its commitment to universal preschool education through the identification of areas with the worst rates of educational exclusion, and which show the highest percentages of preschool-aged children. Simultaneously, MEP identified priority projects for a preschool education infrastructure, and a simulation exercise was carried out to assess the results such a focus could have on preschool coverage. As a consequence, it is expected that a 77.6 per cent target rate could be reached for Interactive II period.

Likewise, assistance was provided to PANI for the purpose of developing a comprehensive policy aimed at early childhood, with broad technical consultations. For 2016, the CNNA will create an interinstitutional committee with the purpose of developing a proposal. The policy is expected to be approved in 2016.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

In a coordinated effort with the MEP and INEC, UNICEF provided technical assistance for the development of workshops across the country, by region, where educational information related to exclusion was presented. These workshops included a pledge signed as a "National Commitment to Combat School Exclusion" by educators and community leaders in each region.

UNICEF Costa Rica, together with MEP, UNESCO and UNDP concluded a national study on the five dimensions of exclusion based on the "Out-of-School Initiative" methodology, which is the main input for the national strategy "I'm All In" aimed at preventing exclusion.

Strategy implementation has begun, focused on 196 secondary schools located within the 75 districts with the highest dropout rates. The strategy has the support of institutions such as PANI and the ministries of Public Health, Security and Human Development and Social Inclusion, amongst others.

Although Costa Rica had an overall increase of exclusion, in schools where the strategy is being implemented there was an increase in services designed to reduce dropout rates:

- With respect to 2014, more than 1,532 students attending night school had access to cafeterias for school meals.
- 564 scholarships from the National Fund (FONABE) were issued to students over 21 years of age.
- 7,200 tenth-grade students received direct support in academic areas where they had deficiencies.
- Child care service for 1,207 student mothers was provided through the National Child Care Network (REDCUDI). PANI identified 475 teenage mothers and allocated 360 scholarships for them. Similarly, PANI assigned 1,020 scholarships to other students.
- FONABE allocated 161,000 scholarships to students and included 1,559 new scholarships to students attending open school.
- The Avancemos programme provided subsidies to 145,000 students living in poverty.

During the second half of the year increases in exclusion prompted UNICEF Costa Rica to collaborate with MEP in the "Dare to Study" campaign, which is aimed at encouraging staying in school and reducing dropout rates. Together with UNESCO, certain actions of communication with public schools were designed to promote school enrolment in 2016, particularly in areas with high dropout rates. UNICEF supported the Student Arts Festival involving significant participation by all schools in the country with the theme of preventing exclusion.

Despite the wide coverage of the national programme for peaceful coexistence, it required a review for the reformulation and improvement of national protocols for handling school violence incidents and the development of monitoring tools for the "Living Together" programme. Schools should have access to these tools during the 2016 school year. Sports programmes were carried out at four secondary schools with high levels of violence, intended to promote peaceful coexistence, and achieved high levels of participation. In 2016, these types of activities will be available to high schools that the MEP has identified as being at greater risk of violence.

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

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Taking advantage of the space opened by nationwide discussion of the national policy for early childhood, UNICEF and other UN agencies advocated for the inclusion of preschool education.

Technical assistance was provided for the development of an educational guide for children of ages not covered by preschool education (0-4). This guide is expected to be completed in early 2017, along with the formulation of actions to increase the number of children between the ages of four and five who should be in preschool. This will improve the transition between preschool and first year of basic general education, where Costa Rica has had historically high levels of grade retention.

This advocacy also took place in the MSP and IMAS, which both have child care programmes. UNICEF Costa Rica has facilitated inter-institutional dialogue and technical inputs to MEP on early childhood development; this is a first step for MEP to progressively offer preschool services nationwide.

UNICEF Costa Rica also gave technical assistance for the implementation of a preschool curriculum reform, which started with the training of about 6,000 teachers, benefiting about 115,000 students. To promote universal access to preschool, actions were initiated in 36 districts with low coverage levels to promote early enrolment, mainly for Interactive Level II (4.3 years), for which the MEP has taken the necessary steps to meet the demand expected in 2016.

A national campaign aimed at parents, to promote a reassessment of preschool education and promote enrolment at this level was launched in 2015. Next year various public service announcements will be disseminated, and partnerships with various health-related institutions will be formed to highlight the importance of early childhood as a development stage and its incorporation into the education system at the correct age level.

Along with PANI, technical advice was provided for the purpose of improving a proposal for a national policy for early childhood development; this is still pending on the national agenda. The proposal was presented to CNNA, which appointed a technical committee that includes UNICEF to analyse the proposal and continue to advocate that the policy be included in the legislative and rulemaking realms in 2016.

Along with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF Costa Rica continued to promote a musical education programme for children in the CINAI CEN centres, for which staff members have been trained in all regions. Together with the PANIAMOR Foundation, alternative approaches aimed at vulnerable families and at-risk communities were provided to 39.5 per cent of CEN CINAI instructors at 153 centres, benefiting about 1,378 families.

Within the PCHSF framework, targeting Ngäbe-Bugle indigenous migrants, a culturally appropriate model for integrated care services for children was developed. The model was tested with 200 indigenous children aged two-to-nine. Currently, the programme is being expanded with the support of IMAS, which provided the necessary resources and funds to sustain the programme.

**OUTCOME 2** 1the capacity of the child protection system is increased to implement innovative strategies to prevent and protect children against the various forms of violence within the schools, families and the community

### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

At the request of the CNNA, UNICEF Costa Rica and UNA supported a review of the SNPI, through a participatory analysis that included members of civil society as well as public and local officials. This review prompted a proposal to improve the SNPI at all levels, which was presented to CNNA and led to the creation of a high-level commission, whose basic function will be to develop a strategy to determine the feasibility of its implementation starting in 2016.

Together with the CNNA, UNICEF Costa Rica was able to reactivate a committee to reformulate the National Plan against Violence. Progress was achieved in defining conceptual boundaries and geographical regions and priority areas of action, which will allow the identification of high-risk situations.

Complementary studies were conducted for the purpose of contributing to a better understanding of the factors that increase the risk of violence against children and adolescents at the community, school or family level. In collaboration with the Innocenti Centre, UNICEF Costa Rica conducted a study on the determinants of violence. In collaboration with the Vice Ministry of Peace, statistical and conceptual baselines were also developed.

Complementing these undertakings, and in conjunction with the Supreme Court, the mobile app "Empoderate" (Empower Yourself) was developed to allow children and adolescents to be informed, seek protection and report crimes.

Technical assistance was provided to PANI as follows:

- Completion of the Institutional Strategic Plan, which includes inputs valuable to PANI for its planning processes; for example, the Institutional Master Plan, which UNICEF Costa Rica supported and helped to implement. This plan proposed several work innovations for PANI, promoting a greater focus on preventing violence and less reliance on paternalistic management.
- UNICEF Costa Rica continued to support PANI with the implementation of a new methodology for preparing community trainers, who in turn promotes peer training of parents on issues and skills relate to the prevention of domestic violence. The CAI programme concluded a strategy under development since 2013, and which UNICEF promoted jointly with PANI and IFAM. Through CAI, the agenda for children and adolescents was promoted at the national and local levels in 39 per cent of the cantonal municipalities.
- PANI continued its efforts toward deinstitutionalisation, which started in late 2013, and further strengthened its new Protection Unit with new measures. In 2015, 90 more children were deinstitutionalised than was the case in 2014.

For 2016, an agreement with the National Distance Education University (UNED) will include a teaching module on the rights of children and adolescents, to be delivered through municipal training and developed with IFAM funding.

The strengthening of institutions and their municipal counterparts contributed to the empowerment of local protection systems, whose interventions were improved. This is the case for the Local Protection System in Coto Brus, which was supported by UNICEF under the PCHSF framework and developed for the second consecutive year. This is a programme of care and comprehensive protection provided to indigenous Ngäbe-Bugle children living in coffee plantations along the border between Panama and Costa Rica. These children accompany their parents during their work migration.

Through advocacy conducted with DGME and IMAS, UNICEF Costa Rica provided financial resources for the care and protection of indigenous migrants so that the programme could be sustained and possibly extended to other areas of the country in coming years. Negotiations in this regard should continue in 2016.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

To improve local protection and violence prevention, various models and innovations were promoted.

Through the strategy promoted by the CAI programme, UNICEF worked with 32 cantons, of which 12 had reported the lowest rates of child welfare and seven were amongst the most violent in the country. The results obtained through this new model of protection of the rights of children and adolescents at the local level show that:

- Comprehensive protection policies were promoted at the local level; there was an increase in local participation by adolescents; issues of awareness-raising and advocacy about violence prevention were developed; and the increased budgets of municipalities in 32 of the 81 cantons of the country were noted.
- Over 60 per cent of the participating cantons (20) adopted policies on children and adolescents and allocated resources for the development of their action plans (from a 2013 baseline of zero).
- Budget estimates from various cantons showed that the total budget allocated to children and adolescents in the 32 municipalities was nine times greater than the initial budget for 2013, estimated at approximately US\$470,640
- Participation by children and adolescents in the municipalities increased fifty-fold, so that at the end of the year there were about 2,500 participants in permanent groups managed by municipalities and youth leaders.
- Thirty-two municipalities reported an increase of about 113 inter-institutional projects aimed at children and adolescents compared to 2013.

Within the PCHSF framework, a comprehensive care and protection programme in coffee plantations along the southern border between Panama and Costa Rica was developed to serve migrant children of indigenous Ngäbe-Bugle ethnicity, who accompany their parents during seasonal work migration. Sixteen Homes of Happiness were supported in 2015; to date they have served around 400 children under the age of 10.

- A mobile app was developed to increase access by young people to various protection programmes and judicial services. "Empoderate" (Empower Yourself) gives young people an opportunity to learn about their rights, how to seek protection and report crimes related to sexual violence, drug trafficking, bullying and others.
- The formulation of FAMA was completed. Through this programme parents educate other parents to prevent domestic violence. FAMA is promoted from within communities, and it implies the formation of self-help groups amongst parents and relatives, who reflect and share experiences on parenting and raising children without corporal punishment.
- A baseline study that will conclude in 2016 was conducted across four urban communities in the metropolitan area, selected due to their high levels of violence for the

purpose of validating the 'CARD methodology' and analysing risk factors that prompt children to join gangs, use drugs, carry weapons or become involved in drug trafficking.

**OUTPUT 2** The National Integrated Child Protection System (SNPI) has an established mechanism to monitor and evaluate its performance and results.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Several initiatives were conducted to strengthen the implementation of strategies and improve comprehensive protection:

- Technical assistance for the development of PANI's Institutional Strategic Plan (2015-2020) was completed. Assistance began with the support of the Institutional Management Master Plan, which promotes innovative initiatives based on a model of office mobility, expansion, and the opening of several centres for early intervention in communities known to be at high social risk of violence.
- The formulation of the National Plan against Violence, which had been suspended in 2014, was reactivated. With the new committee in place, several public institutions became involved and social inclusion was promoted. The Commission made progress with regard to conceptual aspects of violence and priority areas of intervention, differentiating their intent from other initiatives; that is, exploring factors that incite violence rather than its manifestations.
- A study was developed in conjunction with the Innocenti Centre, based on the analysis of numerous secondary sources. This study concluded with a look at the "Drivers of Violence Affecting Children and Adolescents in Costa Rica."
- The SNPO was strengthened through a review of its structure, achievements and operations, and a proposal for improvement was submitted to the CNNA, which is, in turn, defining the actions that should continue to be implemented in 2016.

Given that PANI gave priority to other processes, less progress than expected was achieved with regard to deinstitutionalisation of children. Thus a commission was established to bring together academia, civil society and PANI in 2015. Nevertheless, challenges remain with regard to the strengthening of PANI's information system, which has not yet been integrated with the National Violence Information System.

**OUTCOME 3** Increased national and local capacities to systematically monitor and generate quality information, ensure that disadvantaged children and adolescents are prioritised by social policies and programs.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

During 2014, a process of advocacy and dialogue was conducted with newly elected Government officials in relation to national and regional goals of the 2015-2018 National Development Plan. The methodology previously chosen for the plans' development did not allow the inclusion of comprehensive goals and needs of the child and adolescent populations.

Ongoing dialogue promoted by the CNNA resulted in an agreement to develop an Agenda for Children and Adolescents. In this fashion, a participatory process began that has resulted in the creation of a platform to specify national goals and international commitments within a prioritised sequence of programmes and actions that includes major stakeholders.

The "National Agenda for Children and Adolescents 2015-2021" was presented in September 2015 as part of the celebrations for the Day of the Child. A commitment was made with the signatures of the president of the CNNA, the executive director of PANI, members of civil society and the President of the Republic, who was the guest of honour. The CNNA is now working with the proposed monitoring and evaluation set forth in the Agenda.

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

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

- Together with INEC and MIDEPLAN, UNICEF is developing a set of poverty maps in relation to children and adolescents, within the poverty reduction initiative; the idea is to have a resource that includes aspects related to supply of and demand for services. This system will be developed as a specific children's module in the social mapping system currently used by the Government as part of its initiative to reduce extreme poverty. The maps should be completed in 2016.
- In response to the need for an Information System on Children and Adolescents, an inter-agency agreement between INEC, MIDEPLAN, PANI and UNICEF was signed, establishing guidelines for development and features a technical committee that is developing a conceptual proposal for implementation. All this is within the framework of the Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence being promoted by PANI.
- UNICEF Costa Rica, together with MIDEPLAN, supported the development of a Technical Cooperation Catalogue focused on children and adolescents. MIDEPLAN is currently finalising the development of a Web platform for this catalogue, which will allow greater opportunities for information exchange.
- With the University of Costa Rica, UNICEF prepared the 8th Report on the state of children's rights. This was observed on the 25th anniversary of the signing of the CRC. The report primarily aims to contribute to the continuous improvement of Government actions for the welfare of children and adolescents in Costa Rica.

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

#### **Analytical Statement of Progress:**

- In collaboration with the Central American Institute of Public Administration (ICAP), the development of a "Commitment for Childhood and Adolescence, A Social Observatory" continues. This aims to be a platform for dialogue that will analyse bottlenecks and problems in the management of social development policies that limit or prevent the reduction of poverty. It also aims to promote social inclusion and therefore the integral development of minors, especially those who live in conditions of vulnerability, poverty and extreme poverty.
- UNICEF has also been working with ICAP, UNESCO, UNDP, the Presidential Social Council, the National Women's Institute and IMAS to develop the "First Forum for Social Management, which offered opportunities to discuss the contemporary challenges of social development, reflecting on the future of social policies in Costa Rica. It is expected to become a permanent working group.

- UNICEF Costa Rica also supported the drafting of the alternative report to the CRC, which the country must submit in 2016.

**OUTCOME 4** The programme of cooperation will have incorporated a gender perspective, communications for development and preparedness and response for children and adolescents in emergencies.

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

Issues of equality, Millennium Development Goals, education, violence, excluded populations, and the general situation of children were highlighted and communicated. Strategies such as the generation of information, use of social networks and implementation of teaching materials were used for working with the community. UNICEF's social media presence increased considerably: the number of followers grew by 300 per cent to 24,900, its reach increased from 8,300 to an average of 23,000. With 56,400 Web visitors, traffic increased by 62 per cent. The Twitter profile currently has 9,300 followers. The website and the Facebook page of the CAI programme were strengthened with a 900 per cent increase in followers.

The progress and challenges of fulfilling the rights of children received greater visibility on the national agenda through broadcast advertising and social networks:

- a) the Global Report "A Fair Chance for Every Child":
- b) the EDNA
- c) the National Agenda for Children and Adolescents
- d) the Regional Study on Food and Beverages

These studies had significant social media reach (20,000 accounts reached on average) and an estimated advertising cost of US\$70,000.

UNICEF and MEP established three campaigns to promote school retention and/or return and academic success. These campaigns were "I'm All In With Education," and "Dare to Study" (both designed to prevent exclusion), and "Preschool: The First Step Before Flight", which aims for a 100 per cent enrolment rate in preschools. The impacts of these strategies are expected to be gleaned in 2016.

Moreover, MEP and the Country Office produced a series of teaching materials (interactive guides, videos, posters, and leaflets) to prevent bullying in schools:

MEP and UNICEF Costa Rica jointly promoted the "Create, Discover and Share" nationwide contest, encouraging the socialisation of innovative educational experiences augmented with the use of digital technologies to improve the learning process. Sixty-eight innovative experiences developed by teachers from preschool, primary and secondary institutions were received as part of this contest, including schools in both urban and rural areas.

In partnership with the judiciary, UNICEF Costa Rica supported the development of "Empower Yourself," a mobile application that seeks to facilitate access to the justice system by adolescents and their families. The mobile app covers topics related to duties and responsibilities of adolescents, sexual violence, maternity and paternity, issues, child abuse and substance addiction.

"Empower Yourself" and the MEP mobile app developed in 2013 are two innovative tools that allow UNICEF and partners bring key information to students, teachers and families by

promoting positive use of new technologies. From April 2013 to December 2015, the MEP mobile app was downloaded 33,306 times and "Empower Yourself" was downloaded 3,000 times.

The Minister of Education participated in the Global Business Coalition for Education to support the Strong and Safe Schools campaign, which is in turn promoted by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office.

A social media campaign to raise funds for the Music for Children programme, which aims to reach more than 42,000 children less than eight years of age attending CEN CINAI centres around the country, was designed and launched.

Under a regional project led by UNICEF on the issues of emergency management and disability, a consultation process was conducted in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama. The stakeholders included emergency commissions and institutions operating within the realm of disability. The consultation culminated in the drafting of the document "Guidelines for Inclusion, Protection and Care of Persons with Disabilities during Emergencies and Disasters." After the consultation, teaching materials were produced and distributed to disseminate the rules and guidelines for promoting cultural changes within institutions and social organisations working with children, adolescents and adult populations who live with disabilities during disaster management situations.

The countries participating in the project welcomed the rapprochement between stakeholders on the topic of disability and emergencies, who must learn about the complexity of "the other world" and recognise the imperative of addressing this challenge together, thereby creating two-way awareness that facilitates consensus and commitment.

The guidelines and rules for the inclusion, protection and proper care of persons with disabilities during emergencies are part of a framework of issues to consider for ensuring the effective participation of people with disabilities in the design and decision-making of these measures.

In each country, a road map has been developed as part of a strategic framework for coordination, consultation and positioning of the subject on the national agenda. This road map should be followed by institutions that deal with disability and risk management issues, and there must be participation by groups of persons who live with disabilities as well societal stakeholders.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The campaign "An End to Violence" was disseminated via news media and social networks; it reached more than 190,000 followers and prompted engagement by 41,000, thus facilitating the inclusion of this issue in the ANNA report for 2015-2021

Together with the Ombudsman and PANI, UNICEF Costa Rica supported the "If You Keep Quiet You Allow It to Happen" movement, which was part of a national rally to prevent violence against children; over 3,000 people participated in this event.

Additionally, the methodology of the Families in Action Network, which seeks to prevent domestic violence, was disseminated within communities.

A consultation process was held with parents and key stakeholders from the education sector to learn about the perceptions of these groups on preschool education. This query served as a baseline to drive a Communication for Development (C4D) strategy to achieve 100 per cent preschool enrolment. Another baseline was developed on the topic of out of school children, to assist in the design of a C4D strategy in 2016.

A communication strategy to promote social inclusion and integrated development of Ngäbe Bugle children was designed and implemented. The strategy included radio and TV spots as well as print materials. Under the PCHSF programme the CCSS, CEN CINAI and DGME created and published teaching materials to promote the comprehensive development of children benefited by the Homes of Happiness. In partnership with CEN CINAI, four flipcharts were developed to teach culturally relevant practices about hygiene, feeding, food and early childhood development, to be used by health workers in C4D processes.

UNICEF supported a participatory process involving about 30 teenagers to analyse and publicly present the results of the "Your Voice Counts" survey, in which 9,226 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 21 participated. The adolescents delivered the presentation to the Second Vice President and to the Council on Adolescence, along with proposals for action. Amongst the main concerns identified the young respondents were: environmental damage (75.43 per cent); security (67 per cent); poverty (44.49 per cent); discrimination (60.55 per cent); arts, sports and recreation (58.66 per cent); and engagement (38.87 per cent). This survey served as a baseline for the design of a national strategy to promote empowerment and participation by this population group.

Along with UNS, the campaigns "Viva la diversidad" (Up With Diversity) and "Anímate a conocerme" (Dare to know me) were placed on the national agenda to raise awareness about human rights.

Within the regional framework of emergencies and disability issues, and with the inputs obtained by the Central American Forum on People With Disabilities (Nicaragua, June 2 to 4), a strong focus on disability was positioned inside the regional agenda for risk management at the Central American Policy for Integrated Risk Management Disaster Forum (El Salvador June 18 to 19). People with disabilities participated in all panel discussions.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Annual Management Plan (AMP) set-out the priorities and indicators related to the Country Programme and Office management and performance. Progress was monitored by the CMT through the Manager's Dashboard, in order to identify weakness and implement corrective measures.

Operations assumed the implementation of actions and measures for effective and efficient use of resources and management of support.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Office updated its Risk Control Self-Assessment (RCSA) in 2015.

The CMT monitored its oversight indicators to ensure alignment with global standards in terms of management and quality assurance.

All Office statutory committees were established promptly and functioned according to UNICEF rules and regulations. The composition of the committees was reviewed during preparation of the AMP.

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

UNICEF Costa Rica has two outstanding audit recommendations.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Office monitored and tracked the budget and results on a weekly basis, which with time has created a model to monitor progress, identify challenges and make decisions. Consequently all target measures of effective financial management were met.

Measures adopted include: 1) weekly budget monitoring in all work areas; 2) agreement to adjust the office schedule to speed up implementation; 3) liquidation of all funds by counterparts according to HACT standards; 4) agreements with the suppliers of goods and services to reduce the number of transactions and to accumulate bills until the total amount due exceeds \$500; 5) UN-House agreement with UNFPA and UNDP to improve efficiency and effectiveness of services for premises.

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

**Analytical Statement of Progress:**

The Country Office managed recruitment processes for three positions that are expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2016. All staff members completed the required performance evaluation steps on time.

The staff has been trained and worked on topics such as planning and project managements and social networks. All staff have access to counselling resources as well as support by the staff association and human resources personnel.

## Document Center

### Evaluation and Research

Title	Sequence Number	Type of Report
Educational Exclusion in the Costa Rican Public System	2015/003	Research
8th Report on the State of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (EDNA)	2015/002	SitAn
Evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer Program Avancemos	2015/001	Evaluation

### Other Publications

Title
Innovation Lab in COSTA RICA: Exploratory mission
9 videos of "houses of happiness" Programme
Main results of the survey "Your Voice It" (Brochure)
Multimedia Toolkit of Action Protocol in the situations of bullying (guide, poster and brochure)
5 videos of experiences of innovative use of technology in schools
5 Flipcharts for indigenous children (nutrition, foods, hygiene, pregnancy and child development)
National Agenda for Children and Adolescents in Costa Rica
Toolkit for parent training in positive parenting patterns (Guide for parents, support materials and brochure)

### Lessons Learned

Document Type/Category	Title
Lesson Learned	"Tu Vos Vale (Your Voice Counts)"
Innovation	Casas de la Alegría - Homes of Happiness