

Cuba

Part 1: Situation update in the country

Following the inaugural session of the newly-elected National Assembly, its members voted to elect a new President of the Council of Ministers and the Council of State. The Country's First Vice-President received unanimous support and was sworn in on 19 April. This marked the conclusion of the general election process that began in late 2017 and was postponed for two months due to the effects of Hurricane Irma. The new National Assembly elected through the process consists of 605 members, out of whom 53 per cent are women and 13 per cent are under the age of 35 years. The President's top priorities includes economic growth, through the implementation of policies that enhance efficiency and attract foreign investment.

The country kicked off a major Constitutional reform process to update the document dated from 1976. The Government convened thousands of block-level meetings across Cuba over a nearly three-month period of 'popular consultation' on a draft of the new Constitution. As a result of the consultation process, where approximately nine million people participated, the original draft received 760 amendments. The Assembly-approved text will move on to a referendum vote in late February 2019 and the new Constitution is expected to take effect in April 2019. Following the formal approval process and the Constitution's entry into force, several other legal reforms will take place. This will include the updating of the Family Code and the Code on Children and Youth, which date back to 1975 and 1978 respectively, and are among the instruments that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended the State Party review in relation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The draft emphasizes the concept of children as subjects of fundamental rights as well as the State and society's obligation to protect their development. The draft also includes an explicit prohibition on all forms of violence within the family setting and introduces a wider view of social security benefits for family members who are primary caregivers. The text further includes free quality education as a right from early childhood to post-graduate levels.

The Government of Cuba submitted the State Party report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 2018. The report highlights the ratification of international instruments within the reporting year, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and; the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children. It further emphasizes the efforts made to develop a National Action Plan for Children, Adolescents and their families, as well as its strides to ensure free and universal access to social services and how children's rights are a priority in national decision-making processes.

December marked the launch of 3G mobile data in Cuba, a key aspect of the country's informatization policy. By the end of 2018, there were 1,200 Wi-Fi hotspots spread across every municipality. Enhancing citizen's participation in decision-making process and allowing for more direct contact between citizens and local governments is a priority within the policy roll-out to increase connectivity. As users began accessing mobile internet, the state-owned telecommunications company continued warning both parents and children of online risks and

responsible usage practices. The connectivity improvement creates opportunities for increasing access to information in education for enhancing children's 21st century skills as well as UNICEF Cuba's programme initiatives for a wider reach, data collection and interaction with target populations, particularly on behaviour change.

The country's economy grew by 1.2 per cent, below the 2 per cent forecast. It was impacted by the recovery efforts from the damage caused by Hurricane Irma in 2017 and increasing restrictions by the Government of the United States of America released in November. The latter measures consist of broadening the list of entities with which U.S. businesses and individuals are prohibited from doing financial transactions with. On a positive side, official statistics showed a 1.3 per cent growth in tourism, with about 4.75 million people visiting Cuba in 2018. The dual currency system remained in place and the announced currency unification process continues to be a concern for United Nations (UN) operations in Cuba. The newly-approved national budget indicated the prioritization of social services, with 23.7 per cent allocated to the education sector, 27.5 per cent to health and 17 per cent to social security.

Key social indicators on health and education remained stable and well above regional averages. In relation to health, Cuba reported an infant mortality rate of 4 per 1,000 live births and an under-five mortality rate of 5.3 per 1,000 live births. There were 116,320 births nationwide in 2018, 1,349 more than 2017. The country's epidemiological profile also remained stable throughout the year, with a decrease in Zika and chikungunya cases and an increase in dengue cases in the provinces of Cienfuegos and Sancti Spiritus. Other provinces with dengue cases were Villa Clara, Holguin and Havana, although the number of cases in these provinces had decreased by the end of 2018. In education, the third curricular adjustment process which began in 2011 is still underway. Its main objective is allowing for more flexibility in contextualization of contents, placing more emphasis on student empowerment as well as family and community involvement, considering the free and universal system.

Although the Government of Cuba did not request UN involvement in the emergency response, two natural disasters affected the country in 2018. Sub-tropical storm Alberto struck the central region in May, resulting in eight deaths and one missing person, over 24,000 individuals being evacuated, flooding, the collapse of infrastructure and significant damage to 1,300 houses. Hurricane Michael, a category one hurricane, affected the extreme west of the country, mainly in the province of Pinar del Río. A total of 520 homes and 69 schools were damaged, mainly roofs and carpentry. The province also suffered severe losses in agriculture with 1,434 hectares of damaged food crops, vegetables and grains.

Drawing on lessons learned from previous emergency responses in which UNICEF Cuba led the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education sectors and as part of the emergency preparedness actions, UNICEF Cuba with financial support from the Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) managed to pre-position supplies to provide immediate response to emergencies. The pre-positioned supplies would allow for an immediate response reach to about 9,000 children. In addition, UNICEF Cuba is working closely with the Ministry of Education and the Civil Defence to design its potential contribution to the national response to an earthquake scenario, given its high likelihood in the eastern region.

In late April, Cuba hosted an international health convention, gathering 27 ministers of health, about 81 delegations and participants from 94 countries to discuss 'Universal Health for Sustainable Development'. Key topics included the need to address social determinants through public policies, child and maternal health and the need to foster cross-sectoral linkages

in early childhood development.

In May, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), held a session in Havana. It brought together ECLAC's 46 member states and 13 associate members to debate the main challenges for implementing the 2030 Agenda in the region. The UN Secretary-General, addressing the opening session, noted both the benefits and disadvantages resulting from globalization and highlighted global concerns, such as the gender pay gap and youth unemployment. ECLAC released a research piece entitled 'The Inefficiency of Inequality' at the event. The study highlights that pro-equality policies make positive contributions to social well-being and help create a fairer economic system, conducive to better learning and concern for the environment. A key aspect of the ECLAC sessions included an emphasis on fostering South-South cooperation. Cuba, led a session in partnership with the UN system, showcasing good practices in the health, education and disaster risk reduction areas, where the country has shown leadership and implementing capacity for the replication or contextualization in other countries.

In relation to the operational environment, the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the USA continued to pose constraints related to financial management, delays in banking transactions and increased freight costs in supply procurement. Further, supply procurement continues to be a high risk for UNICEF due to the complex national import mechanisms and the impossibility of procuring supplies in the local market. Internet connectivity was an annual management priority, due to the limitations on the effective use of corporate tools and platforms. A router system failure in May resulted in an internet blackout for the UNICEF office which lasted nine days and led to the activation of the Business Continuity Plan. Staff accessed the internet from the Havana offices of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). With financial support from UNICEF LACRO, the internet connection was upgraded, reaching a 2/1 MB speed for corporate use and 4/1Mb for internet use through the satellite connection and switching other traffic through a local ADSL. Two new staffing posts were established, a human resources associate and administration assistant, as a result of a regional analysis that recommended the strengthening of the operations functions at the country level, through the global institutional budget. There were two recruitment processes conducted in 2018 to succeed staff members due for retirement.

Although UNICEF Cuba reached its 2018 fundraising target by forging new partnerships with governments (such as the United Arab Emirates, Galicia and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation) and private sector allies including Sherrit, Iberostar and a multi-country partnership with Beko led by LACRO, mobilizing resources remained a high-risk area and a challenge.

Part 2: Major Results including in humanitarian action and gender, against the results in the Country Programme Documents

Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

UNICEF Cuba, through its health and nutrition programme component for 2014-2019 strives to strengthen partnerships with national health institutions for risk-informed increased capacity and quality of care. This is fully aligned with the National Social and Economic Development plan and contributes to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

Outcomes related to population dynamics; quality, development and sustainability of social and cultural services; and food and nutrition security.

In 2018, UNICEF Cuba in partnership with the National Child and Maternal Health Programme under the Ministry of Public Health (MoH) provided cognitive and organizational tools as well as specialized equipment to strengthen systems and capacities in all 58 maternity hospitals, where 99 per cent of all births take place nationwide. In complementary actions, UNICEF Cuba also supported capacity strengthening workshops to increase problem-solving skills for basic care of pregnant women during birth, as well as the prevention of complications and haemorrhages. This training programme reached 50 health professionals including paediatricians and intensive care experts, who improved their knowledge and agreed on criteria for special care of pregnant adolescent girls, who show high levels of morbidity in intensive care units.

In partnership with the National Childcare Group, UNICEF Cuba reached 343 primary and secondary health care professionals with the main objective of increasing their holistic child and adolescent care skills through courses and workshops. Following the programme roll-out, the MoH reported an increase in the frequency and quality of controls that monitor growth and development of children aged under 18 years in Las Tunas, Villa Clara, Havana and the Isla de la Juventud special municipality. These areas were prioritized as they showed above-average mortality figures. In these provinces, UNICEF Cuba also led advocacy efforts and provided financial support to strengthen the multi-disciplinary linkages between the education and health sectors in early childhood development through integrated platforms focusing on health, nutrition, neurological development stimulation and education services. UNICEF Cuba supported this integration through capacity building initiatives as well as technical exchanges and monitoring efforts that resulted in better understanding at the community levels of key aspects of child health in early childhood.

As part of the 2018 re-certification process that covered 16 hospitals in the Child and Mother-Friendly Hospital Initiative, UNICEF Cuba worked with the National Breastfeeding Commission to ensure that appropriate evaluation instruments that incorporate international standards are used for the recertification and also provided financial support to experts for the process monitoring. Sixteen maternity hospitals were re-certified in 2018, adding to 24 in 2017: together these 40 hospitals account for 75 per cent of the total number originally certified. In the context of the National Breastfeeding week, UNICEF Cuba focused its efforts in providing a discussion and exchange space for 93 health professionals who shared their knowledge on local experiences to promote breastfeeding at the community level that could be contextualized for nationwide application.

Joining efforts with the MoH to ensure the best possible care for at-risk newborns, UNICEF Cuba provided specialized equipment for setting up the Human Breast Milk Bank in the Matanzas province. This contributed to the care of 3,161 at-risk newborns nationwide who received human breast milk, which in turn helped reduced further complications. With UNICEF Cuba's support, the already scaled-up Milk Bank model has reached 10 provinces.

UNICEF Cuba's measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine procurement complemented the National Immunization Programme and reached 80 per cent of children aged under-one year, ensuring their best possible start in life, with support from Iberia and the Spanish National Committee for UNICEF. UNICEF Cuba also worked closely with the programme in training modules for 25 professionals for the standardization of guidelines in immunization.

UNICEF Cuba worked closely with the Provincial Health Department in the Santiago province to implement a social communication strategy to promote safe water consumption and hygiene practices. As part of the initiative, UNICEF Cuba and the provincial health department trained 1,050 health promoters, of whom 48 per cent were women. Families, adolescents, girls and boys of the drought-affected Abel Santamaria community were empowered and became agents of change to promote hygiene and safe drinking water practices. This experience was replicated in two other communities in the Santiago and Havana provinces. The data collected showed increase knowledge on safe water consumption knowledge from 72 per cent of the population showing appropriate knowledge in 2017 to 81 per cent in 2018. Knowledge of handwashing in children and adolescents also increased, with 81 per cent of the total child population having the correct knowledge in 2018 compared with 63 per cent in 2017.

In response to the sectoral priority of reaching adolescents to provide knowledge to prevent HIV and promoting their testing, UNICEF Cuba worked with the MoH to develop capacity building initiatives and foster cross-sectoral integration. As part of this partnership, UNICEF Cuba and the MoH trained 150 adolescents to become promoters and community multipliers for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. This reached 30,160 adolescents (14,779 male and 15,381 female), almost doubling the 2017 figure.

To increase risk perception through multi-sectoral coordination within its road safety initiative, UNICEF Cuba worked with the National Road Safety Commission, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Interior, the MoH, the Ministry of Transportation, provincial governments and the media. These actions, implemented through the education sector and mass media with financial support from the International Automobile Federation FIA and Sherritt International, reached 18,435 girls and boys and their families to increase their awareness on road safety practices and prevention of unintentional injuries. The programme contributes to the strategic planning of the SDG target on inclusive and resilient road safety.

Joint work between UNICEF Cuba and the Centre for Nutrition and Food Hygiene (CNFH) resulted in enhanced data collection on the correct usage of nutritional guidelines for children aged 0-2 years. The evaluation showed persistent inadequate feeding practices that may have an impact in overall health from early childhood. Further, a study covering 288 children in the Artemisa province aged 0-5 years showed that vitamin A deficiency is not a public health concern, having decreased from 20 per cent in 2013 to 0.4 per cent in 2018. In addition, UNICEF Cuba and the CNFH worked closely with technical experts to finalize the Nutritional Guidelines for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women, which provides primary health care providers with the accurate information for nutritional counselling and will contribute to prevent health concerns in pregnancy as well as enhance age-appropriate child growth.

Community participation and empowerment continued to be among the key factors that leads to higher level results. Other success factors included cross-sectoral synergies, the set-up of national coordination committees to strengthen local-level initiative management as well as the sharp equity and evidence-based selection of geographic focus in accordance to the vulnerability profile in specific communities, using communication for development (C4D) approaches for behavioural change.

Humanitarian action

UNICEF Cuba designed and implemented actions to address an extreme drought situation in the province of Santiago through a Joint Programme to strengthen resilience of families and

vulnerable groups affected by drought. As part of these joint actions, UNICEF Cuba worked with UNDP and the World Food Programme (WFP) to develop a water management chain with articulated results and strengthened local-level partnerships among different actors, capacity strengthening and community participation and empowerment.

Further, acknowledging the country's vulnerabilities to weather-related emergencies, UNICEF worked at the local level in the Jesus Menendez municipality in the province of Las Tunas, to promote nutritional resilience in high-risk communities due to their vulnerability to natural disasters. With the CNFH, UNICEF Cuba strengthened the communities' capacity to respond to natural disasters in their neighbourhoods, at the primary health facility level and in schools. As a result, 47,938 community members gained updated knowledge on nutrition and feeding management in emergency situations, as well as practical guidelines to do so.

In addition, as part of the early recovery phase in the Hurricane Irma Response Plan, UNICEF Cuba provided long-term water storage means to increase household level resilience. A total of 56,786 people (28,960 women and 27,826 men) out of whom 10,270 were under the age of 18 years in the most-affected municipalities in the Villa Clara Sancti Spiritus, Ciego de Avila and Camaguey provinces benefitted. These actions were carried out to complement the immediate response with the support from the Government of Canada and the Spanish Committee for UNICEF. The focus on resilience, also a key element of the Joint Programme, is a critical aspect that strengthens the humanitarian-development continuum.

Gender

UNICEF Cuba enhanced the gender equality focus of its actions at the community health level with an emphasis on ensuring quality care for pregnant adolescents. Other actions included the capacity strengthening efforts for child care and the hygiene promotion campaign where 1,050 women leaders were selected to promote hygiene as community agents of change and, in doing so, reached 16,062 people.

Evidence generation initiatives carried out by UNICEF Cuba and national partners revealed that in 93 per cent of cases, mothers of children aged under two years make all decisions related to their children's food intake. This data will inform further actions included within the framework of the Father from the Beginning initiative, aiming to increase fathers' involvement in these decisions. Through this initiative, UNICEF Cuba promotes equal gender relations from the family planning stage, antenatal care, birth, postnatal care and early childhood. The leadership of the National Programme for Maternal and Child Care foresees the engagement through use of specific materials and tools by the approximately 10,000 family doctors carrying out primary health attention at community level, including providing antenatal care and postnatal care across the country. Identifying the potential of fathers' participation in increasing breastfeeding rates, the national programme requested UNICEF-designed materials for display and dissemination across all the 58 maternity hospitals of the country where 99.9 per cent of the births take place every year.

South-South cooperation

With financial support from LACRO and under the guidance from the South-South Cooperation Unit in UNICEF headquarters, work was undertaken with the MoH to document a case study on health systems strengthening with good practices and key factors that resulted in the elimination of vertical transmission of HIV and syphilis as well as its certification process. The case study will enhance knowledge exchange between countries through South-South cooperation.

Goal area 2: Every child learns

UNICEF Cuba, through its education programme component 2014-2019 strives to provide children and adolescent facing diverse types of vulnerabilities with better learning conditions with support from their families and communities. This is fully aligned with the National Social and Economic Development plan which prioritizes the quality of education, social inclusion of children with disabilities, technical and vocational training for adolescent and education in rural areas. The component also contributes to UNDAF Outcomes related to population dynamics; quality, development and sustainability of social and cultural services; as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Within the nationally-led training process to improve the quality of education, UNICEF Cuba engaged with the National Directorate for Early Childhood of the Ministry of Education (MoE) to strengthen capacities of 97.3 per cent of education agents that provide early childhood development services. This also contributed to the national curricula update process taking place in all provinces and at the community level through the Educate Your Child Programme, in which 68 per cent of children aged from 0-5 years participate.

In 2018, under the leadership of the Latin American Reference Centre for Special Education, UNICEF Cuba contributed to the national capacity strengthening efforts that reached 158 teachers, specialists and community leaders in the provinces of Mayabeque, Cienfuegos, Camaguey and the Isla de la Juventud special municipality. These actions were geared towards providing tools and skills to allow tailored attention to 1,872 children in an inclusive context. These actions mark the completion for national coverage of workshops on quality psycho-pedagogical diagnostics seeking to identify the adequate level of education in accordance to disability status and severity, sensitize teachers and families to eliminate stigma and ensure that the special education system acts in support of mainstream schools enrolling children with disabilities through the provision of services and special materials. As a complement to these workshops, UNICEF Cuba implemented actions and designed communication for development tools seeking to enhance the social inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF Cuba provided technical and financial support to implement capacity development actions for teachers and decision-makers from vocational schools, aiming to design and develop more effective curricula that cater to the needs of adolescents. The new curricula would also contribute towards the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities in vocational training thereby enhancing their potential to participate in the labour market. UNICEF Cuba also procured supplies to better equip three vocational schools in the provinces of Matanzas, Holguin and Las Tunas, where 737 adolescents (184 girls) are currently enrolled.

All these actions for the inclusion of children with disabilities were a key component of a partnership between UNICEF Cuba, the Spanish National Committee for UNICEF and the Iberostar Foundation. As this partnership has ended, UNICEF Cuba brokered a strategic partnership with the United Arab Emirates that will build on these past achievements over the next two years.

In a continued prioritization of the rural education sector, UNICEF Cuba supported the capacity strengthening of 258 decision-makers through a training-of-trainers approach. This will reach 13,877 teachers and 142,623 students with the objective of rolling out more effective quality

teaching methodologies specially designed for the sector.

The partnership between UNICEF Cuba's and the MoE's Directorate for Science on DRR through the capacity strengthening of teacher's and empowered participation of children continued to yield positive results. The initiative helps strengthen the humanitarian-development continuum and reached three provinces, out of five selected due to their risk profiles, which are among the hardest hit by strong hurricanes over the last two years. 2018 marked a key milestone in the operationalization of this programme, where all involved partners joined efforts to systematize good practices in DRR from 170 schools in 122 communities in 15 vulnerable municipalities with the active participation of about 24,000 students. UNICEF Cuba provided financial and technical support to monitor the participating provinces, which allowed for an ongoing validation of new tools and methodologies used within the newly adjusted curricula as part of the MoE's curricula review and updating process.

Humanitarian action

UNICEF Cuba, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the MoE produced guidelines for the socio-emotional recovery of children and adolescents affected by natural disasters. The manual for teachers was part of the Hurricane Irma response and includes methodological tools and practices to identify and mitigate psychological impacts seen in children following a natural disaster. The publication was validated at the International Disasters Congress in July, and was included in the training package for teachers involved in the DRR programme.

The partnership with the Civil Defence was strengthened through the joint design of a Guide for Families that seeks to ensure their protection during natural disasters and includes child protection aspects. The guide was distributed through the MoE for to all primary schools within the 68 municipalities most vulnerable to natural disasters and contributed to the Civil Defence initiatives at the school level. The guidelines, as well as practical knowledge and measures, were shared with families within the school settings to ensure their participation in such initiatives

As the education emergency response sector leader and in coordination with the MoE, UNICEF Cuba continued implementing the Hurricane Irma Response Plan in 2018. Through the year, as part of the early recovery phase, UNICEF Cuba supported the infrastructure rehabilitation in 69 selected schools in the Villa Clara, Ciego de Avila and Camaguey provinces with 56,000 square metres of roof covers. These actions supported the safe return to schools for about 67,591 children. Further rehabilitation efforts will continue in 2019 for three kindergartens in Habana del Este in partnership with the Junta de Galicia as well as for one technical school in Camaguey in partnership with Iberostar. Both partnerships were brokered with the support of the Spanish National Committee for UNICEF.

Gender equality

The "Father from the Beginning" initiative tackles two of the three thematic priorities included in the Gender Action Plan:

- 1 Gender-responsive communities and systems – which recognizes that men may be discouraged from taking a positive parenting or supportive role for women and children due to gender norms and male workers have little incentive to value or practice care responsibilities;
- 2 Gender-equitable life outcome and socialization for girls and boys – which emphasizes the need to support girls and boys to grow up with more gender equitable roles and

practices, helping to shape the next generation of mothers and fathers for whom gender equality should be the norm rather than the exception.

Father from the Beginning is aligned to the gender goals within the UNICEF Strategic Plan Goal Area 5 and enhances synergies with Goal Areas 1 and 2 as it is an integrated ECD result with great potential to involve men in the achievement of wider programmatic priorities. These include increasing exclusive breastfeeding rates, decreasing the prevalence of violence against children as well as to improve learning and development in early childhood.

Communication for development

In the global Early Moments Matter report, Cuba was featured within the 15 countries throughout the world that have in place the three most important social policies and programmes to support parents in providing children with the best start in life. In contrast, MICS data shows that only 18 per cent of fathers participate in their children's educational activities. To contextualize this global campaign, UNICEF Cuba designed and initiated a cross-sectoral C4D strategy titled 'Father from the Beginning. Its objective is to increase the active participation of fathers during the early years of their children in key health and education development issues, as well as in the domestic/private space, to contribute to programmatic objectives and national priorities across sectors, such as exclusive breastfeeding or prevention of unintentional injuries.

The strategy consists of three pillars:

- 1 The establishment of a cross-sectoral working group on responsible parenting, composed by several national institutions with shared goals and priorities;
- 2 Generation of evidence for advocacy about a topic for which there is very little quantitative and qualitative data, and;
- 3 A conducive sustainable environment that provides free and universal access to education and health services from the family planning stage to improve knowledge and influence attitudes, and practices to shift towards more gender-equitable perspectives about men and women.

In 2018, UNICEF Cuba played a leading role in generating unprecedented knowledge, attitudes and practices evidence about the generalized lack of knowledge and low participation of fathers around paternity during early childhood. It was used for advocating on the potential of engaging them at the highest decision-making levels of the Ministries of Education and Health. UNICEF Cuba led the establishment of a cross-sectoral working group to conceptualize and validate key C4D materials based on evidence and coordinate national distribution and socialization of tools and materials across sectors. More than 20 materials were developed, including print, social media activations, TV spots and dramatized soap opera episodes and the first contextualized and validated parenting Cuban mobile app. The initiative integrates ways to address gender priorities within the education sector but has multisectoral reach and addresses social norms and behaviours that lead to gender discrimination.

Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF Cuba, through its 2014-2019 programme component on the Culture of Rights, Protection and Participation seeks to enhance the integral protection of children and adolescent empowerment in support of existing Government efforts. This is fully aligned with the National Social and Economic Development plan, which prioritizes the prevention of violence against children and adolescent as well as its response. The component also

contributes to UNDAF Outcomes related to population dynamics, and on the quality, development and sustainability of social and cultural services.

Key partners on this programme component include the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, National Sports Institute the Havana City Historian's Office and research centres devoted to generating and analysing data on the situation of children, adolescents and youth.

Through this programme component, UNICEF Cuba has fostered cross-sectoral linkages among key sector partners as well as with other programme components with a view to increase effectiveness and maximize impact. With UNICEF Cuba's advocacy efforts, these linkages have resulted in a more comprehensive approach to address violence prevention, the strengthening of protective environments and joint initiatives on health promotion and social inclusion that converge at the a+ adolescent spaces centre.

As noted earlier in the Annual Report, a major result in 2018 was the Government submission of the State Party report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2018, UNICEF Cuba forged a new partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) with the overall objective of strengthening protective environments for adolescents using gender equality and a rights-based approaches. Initial actions under this partnership included capacity strengthening workshops for justice system professionals working on promoting a culture of child rights.

As part of the joint work with the Havana City Historian's Office, UNICEF Cuba consolidated initiatives on adolescent participation and empowerment using a rights-based approach and with an equity focus. UNICEF Cuba also led advocacy efforts to include child protection issues in initiatives taking place at the a+ adolescent spaces centre and to prioritize the participation of groups of disadvantaged children in these initiatives. These groups include children with disabilities, children without parental care, children in contact with the law and children who live in socially complex communities. UNICEF Cuba provided financial, technical and coordination support to the museum-classroom programme, artistic workshops and other cultural activities that reached 12,432 children (7,335 girls) in Old Havana, out of whom 135 were children with disabilities and 26 were without parental care.

UNICEF Cuba continued providing financial and technical support to the a+ adolescent spaces centre to carry out its workshop series, which in 2018 reached about 6,000 adolescents (2,518 girls) from 11 schools in the Old Havana municipality. These included a wide range of topics such as vocational orientation and training, artistic education, responsible citizenship, science and environment, all using a rights-based participatory approach seeking to empower adolescents and provide them with relevant life skills. Further, UNICEF Cuba supported the coordination to set up counselling services at the centre in partnership with the Mental Health Centre and to develop other outreach initiatives on family relations, interpersonal relations and sexuality. These were among the topics that the adolescents demanded the most.

In late March, as part of the contribution agreement with the European Union (EU) on the Integral and Participatory Development of Adolescents in Old Havana initiative, UNICEF Cuba hosted a verification mission, which showed positive results, as it had no financial findings. Although the implementation has come to a close, UNICEF Cuba continued to coordinate with the EU delegation in Havana on the many activities taking place in the centre and for

considering other future partnership opportunities.

With UNICEF Cuba's financial support and in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and the National Sports Institute, cultural and sport activities with an emphasis on child rights, gender equality and child protection reached over 65,000 children (36,738 girls) throughout the country.

The UNICEF Cuba-supported communities for child and adolescent rights in the Granma province reached 57,713 children in seven out of the 13 municipalities. UNICEF Cuba advocated for the integration of child protection topics as part of its work at the community level and provided capacity strengthening support as well as materials to enable this focus. These combined efforts resulted in the strengthening of protective spaces and enhanced abilities to prevent and address social risk in prioritized groups and territories in response to their vulnerability profile, which includes children with disabilities, children whose parents are serving a prison sentence and those in hard-to-reach communities.

UNICEF Cuba in partnership with the MoE, continued to provide comprehensive support to the 517 children without parental care. In 2018, UNICEF Cuba led capacity building initiatives for 100 decision-makers who manage homes for children without parental care that focused on the application of a rights-based approach in accordance with international standards. Further, UNICEF Cuba and the MoE monitored five of these homes located in the provinces of Guantanamo, Santiago and Granma. The monitoring revealed that staff in these homes appreciate the capacity strengthening initiatives, the cross-sectoral integration and the improved physical conditions achieved with UNICEF Cuba's support.

The partnership between UNICEF Cuba and the Ministry of the Interior focused mostly on capacity strengthening in 2018. Joint actions for which UNICEF Cuba provided training materials and technical expertise as well as financial and coordination support, reached 310 professionals from the child protection sector. The training was related to international standards in comprehensive protection. UNICEF Cuba also procured supplies such as computers and sporting/recreational goods to improve conditions in vocational schools that are part of the social reintegration programmes for children who committed acts that the law classifies as crimes. These reached 170 students in 12 schools as well as protection centres, where children have specialized support seeking to prevent re-victimization when providing statements for judicial proceedings.

Through the For a Rights World initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, UNICEF Cuba continued its capacity strengthening initiatives to promote a culture of rights. In 2018, UNICEF advocacy efforts focused on introducing issues related to violence prevention and results-based management, with key experts and specialists who added a multidisciplinary experience and perspective to a symposium on integral protection.

UNICEF Cuba also provided financial and technical support to a joint University of Havana-National Association of Jurists initiative on Dialogues on Human Rights. With UNICEF Cuba's advocacy, the primary focus of this Dialogue was children's rights in the context of the legal reform process upon which the country is embarking. The technical exchanges on the need to update many provisions related to child rights with a view to better reflect the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the national legislation, as well as to include more explicitly the roles and responsibilities of the many actors involved, strengthened the partnership with the Faculty of Law for future initiatives, including a course and diploma on child rights.

Gender

UNICEF Cuba redoubled efforts to introduce the issue of gender-based violence in all its capacity development initiatives and through the tools used to conduct workshops with adolescents, professionals and families in Havana and Granma. These actions also covered decision-makers in homes for children without parental care, the provincial managers of the For a Right World programme and 30 Ministry of the Interior specialists leading the counselling for adolescents who committed acts that the law classifies as crimes. UNICEF Cuba also provided technical support to the continuous roll-out of a child rights module within the Diploma course on mediation, gender and rights organized by the National Association of Jurists. In 2018 this reached over 40 sector specialists including judges, prosecutors and lawyers from different provinces and focused on addressing integral protection and prevention of gender-based violence. These actions are aligned with the Gender Action Plan priorities on the prevention of gender-based violence on children.

Other cross-sectoral initiatives

UNICEF Cuba has built in positive childrearing and the prevention of violence into the “Father from the Beginning” C4D initiative.

Adolescent empowerment continued to constitute a critical focus of all actions within this programme component, particularly through the workshops held with adolescents at the a+ adolescent spaces centre.

Part 3: Lessons learned and constraints

Lessons learned

Within the framework of the 2014-2019 Country Programme Document, during the year UNICEF Cuba explored and proved the potential of effectively integrating the C4D change strategy and methodology into results-based programming, considering the particularities of the national context. While community-based entities and spaces are built-into and managed by national and local state institutions, there is a window of opportunity in strengthening the institutional capacities and that of frontline workers to influence behaviour change and ignite social mobilization using an evidence-based approach.

The lesson learned lies in the discernment of the operative way forward of this integration, where, given the following two complementary elements, the approach proved feasible and so far successful:

- 1 The full support and engagement throughout the process of a national partner institution(s) on a shared priority;
- 2 A shared interest on generation of evidence around an information gap and the articulation of community-based activities through the institutional cross-sectoral spaces at community level.

These foundations have provided the early childhood development C4D strategy, Father from the Beginning, a promising start and are paving the way for others.

Motivated by the education results area linked to fathers' participation in their children's early education, the objective of the C4D strategy launched in 2018 is to increase the active

participation of fathers during the early years of their children in key health and education spaces. From its onset it identified the community-based early childhood education Educate your Child Programme as its foundation and entry point. Some 68 per cent of Cuban children aged under six years and their families attend this UNICEF-supported programme, led by the National Directorate of Early Childhood of the Ministry of Education. The Cuban model is based on the three essential elements that apply a broad approach of early childhood development: family, community and cross-sectoral synergies. The programme targets parents, relatives and caretakers to improve their parenting skills and foster their active involvement in their children's education. The original objective of Father from the Beginning was to increase the active participation of fathers in key health spaces (such as family planning, antenatal care, preparation for birth course, birth or postnatal care) with a view to engage fathers from the earliest stages and harness their involvement through early education.

The long-standing partnership with the National Directorate of Early Childhood was key in convening all the relevant national institutions. They included Ministry of Public Health (National Programme for Maternal and Child Care), Latin American Centre of Reference for Special Education, Masculinities Network, National Union of Jurists, Federation of Cuban Women and the National Centre of Sexual Education. This working group carried out a cross-sectoral desk review to collect existing evidence and initiatives across sectors, and conceptualized the materials and actions designed using the available evidence.

UNICEF Cuba played a leading role in advocating and providing technical assistance to carry out the first comprehensive knowledge, attitudes and practices study on men's involvement in parenting and domestic care. This generated unprecedented operative evidence on a topic for which there is no reference or national data. A sample of 800 fathers of children attending the Educate Your Child Programme in seven provinces confirmed the generalized lack of knowledge and low participation of fathers around the exercise of their paternity during early childhood. The results shed light on the structural and underlying causes of why only 18 per cent of the Cuban fathers participate in educational activities with their children in their first 36-59 months of life, versus 76 per cent of the mothers (*MICS 2014*).

The evidence fed into the design of an advocacy tool for national institutions and partners at the highest levels of decision-making, particularly the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health. The potential of the initiative and the information leads sparked further synergies with the National Programme for Maternal and Child Care to revert the poor statistics of an urgent crosscutting national ECD priority - increasing breastfeeding rates. The process therefore organically integrated and contextualized the three pillars of the global Early Moments Campaign: Eat (leveraging fathers support during breastfeeding), Play (harnessing fathers' unique contribution to their children's brain development in their first 1,000 days) and Love (introducing awareness about the negative consequences of violence during early childhood and promoting positive parenting). This highlights the potential for improvement of this already conducive national context and enabling environment. The Early Moments Matter report featured Cuba as being among the 15 countries throughout the world that have in place the three most important social policies and programmes to support parents in providing children with the best start in life.

The initiative also provided concluding evidence from the primary audiences to define the contents and approach of the conceptualized C4D materials and actions, ensuring their relevance, effectiveness and the right distribution channels and dissemination spaces. UNICEF Cuba provided important technical assistance to produce the first contextualized and validated

mobile application for fathers, linking their interactive tracking of the week-to-week pregnancy process with their demand for antenatal care visits, among others.

As a best practice, the National Directorate of Early Childhood was involved through the process as a hands-on learning experience. This included being sensitized about the information gap and the value of applying expected results to programming, jointly designing and validating the research instruments and training the programme directors on field data collection to finally validating action and materials. The data was processed and analysed by UNICEF Cuba.

This operative research experience of primary audiences in order to achieve better and more accurate future research results and programme effectiveness measurements revealed two important insights. There is a need to strengthen capacity and motivate the local data collectors directly on the ground, as the inconsistency in the quality and number of surveys per province affected the precision of results for certain questions and integrated indicators. More significantly, given UNICEF Cuba's role in C4D implementation (such as influencing or stimulating demand and strengthening the institutional capacities), it is important to go beyond research with only primary audiences, and extend to knowledge, attitudes and practices of the secondary audiences. Being the groups with whom UNICEF Cuba will work with, it will be their own knowledge, attitudes and practices that define the results indicators that UNICEF Cuba is accountable for.

The potential of this C4D implementation model is further endorsed by its potential for scaling up, given the impact and reach of the national state institutions at provincial and local level. In this particular case, the leadership of the Early Childhood Directorate will have a direct impact on the parents of the 463,393 children involved in the Educate Your Child Programme. The capacity building and sensitization of these frontline workers is being achieved through the training of trainers of the 16 preschool specialists at province level and the 16 directors of the Educate Your Child Programme at province level. Together, they reach the 1,940 early childhood multi-sectoral methodologists and the 2,120 Educate your Child teachers across the country. In parallel, the National Programme for Maternal and Child Care foresees engagement through specific materials and tools of the approximately 10,000 family doctors carrying out primary health care at community level, providing antenatal care and postnatal care across the health institutions where 99.9 per cent of births take place every year (114,000 women).

The feasibility of this approach is reinforced by the conducive media context, where featuring C4D content in the mass media that is in line with national priorities does not necessarily have an added financial cost. Repeatedly claimed as the main source of information and influence across primary audiences regarding several topics, establishing a systematic working relationship with the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television is key to maximizing the impact of C4D strategies in the country.

These lessons are already being applied to other programme areas. An example is in the reduction of overweight and obesity among children in primary school in the province of Cienfuegos, moving forward jointly with the partner institution to obtain the best quality formative data on the basis of agreed result indicators prior to defining and validating actions, or developing materials and tools aimed at teachers and parents.

Other insights from this experience that will be used in programmatic design include the meticulous selection for C4D initiatives through a consultative and advocacy process with the

key counterpart. This is a vital factor in the Cuban programmatic environment considering that community-based interventions are led by government institutions and there are implementing partners as traditionally conceived through programme cooperation agreements. Further, it is necessary to ensure that the issue selected with the government counterpart contributes to their overall sector-wide priorities, since they will devote the human resources to collect the data and sensitize families and communities on the issue. This is particularly relevant given that the workload generated by participating in such initiative is additional to their many routine duties as frontline workers, and that it is their enthusiastic and sustained involvement that will provide the long-term behavioural change results on the ground.

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