

24 October 2011

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board

Revised country programme document

Republic of Panama (2012-2015)

Summary

The draft country programme document (CPD) for Panama (E/ICEF/2011/P/L.43) was presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comments at its second regular session 2011 (12-15 September). The Executive Board approved the aggregate indicative budget of \$3,000,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$4,700,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2012 to 2015.

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2006/19, the present document was revised and posted on the UNICEF website no later than six weeks after discussion of the CPD at the second regular session. The revised CPD is presented to the Executive Board for approval at the first regular session 2012.

*Basic data†
(2009, unless otherwise stated)*

Child population (millions, under 18 years)	1.2
U5MR (per thousand live births)	23
Underweight (per cent, moderate and severe) (per cent, urban/rural, poorest/richest)	4 ^a
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births, 2008)	71
Primary school enrolment (per cent net, male/female)	99-98
Primary schoolchildren completing primary school (per cent)	85
Use of improved drinking water sources (per cent)	93
Use of improved sanitation facilities (per cent)	69
Adult HIV prevalence rate (per cent)	0.9
Child work (per cent, children 5 to 14 years old)	11 ^b
Birth registration (per cent, under 5 years) (per cent, boys/girls, urban/rural, poorest/richest)	
GNI per capita (US\$)	6 740
One-year-olds immunized against DPT3 (per cent)	84
One-year-olds immunized against measles (per cent)	85

† More comprehensive country data on children and women is available at www.childinfo.org.

^a Sixty deaths per 100,000 live births is the 2008 estimate developed by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Interagency Group (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, together with independent technical experts), adjusted for underreporting and misclassification of maternal deaths. For more information see: http://www.childinfo.org/maternal_mortality.html.

^b Database.

Situation of children and women

1. The Republic of Panama owes its ethnic and cultural diversity to the impact of its geographical location and history. With a population of 3.4 million, boys, girls and adolescents between zero and 17 years old represent 34.45 per cent of the population. Indigenous peoples and people of African descent are the groups most affected by poverty, inequality and social exclusion, although between 2004 and 2008 the country reported one of the highest sustained rates of economic growth in the region, peaking at 12.1 per cent in 2007.¹ In 2009, Panama had a gross national income of \$6,740.²

2. Despite its economic growth and the fact that it is considered an “upper middle” income country, with a “high” human development index, Panama is also a nation of marked economic and social inequalities. In 2008, for example, the poorest quintile recorded 3.9 per cent participation in total consumption, while the richest quintile had 53 per cent of the total, meaning that they consumed ~~three~~ 13

¹ In 1996 consumer prices, and according to estimated population on 1 July of each year, developed with the results of the 2000 National Population Census, CGR-INEC, 2010.

² Statistical information from UNICEF.

times more.³ According to the Gini index, Panama is among the 15 most unequal countries in the world, and one of the ten most unequal in Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴

3. Children and adolescents are the group most severely affected by poverty. Figures show that the incidence of monetary poverty in those under age 18 is higher than the national total or that of any other age group.⁵ Half of Panamanian children under age 6 live in monetary poverty; 25 per cent live in extreme poverty. Some 43.8 per cent of those under age 18 live in monetary poverty and 20.9 per cent in extreme poverty,⁶ which continues to be an item on the agenda for meeting Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals.

4. The Government of Panama has developed programmes to improve the nutritional status of children under 5 and programmes for cash transfers aimed at children living in extreme poverty. Both include access to health services and education. Because these programmes cover 90.6 per cent (435,000) of the 480,000 people living in poverty, they have had a positive effect. The 2008 Standard of Living Survey reported a decline in chronic malnutrition in urban areas, which was 13.8 per cent in 2003 and 7.9 per cent in 2008; in rural areas, the reduction was from 18.5 per cent to 14.5 per cent. In indigenous areas, the decline was slight, suggesting that they remain more vulnerable. At the national level, chronic malnutrition in under-fives also showed a slight decline, from 20.6 per cent to 19.1 per cent. Strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation system, studies on the impact of social policy and good practices present opportunities in the area of social policy for the promotion of children.

5. There are over 400,000 indigenous people in the Republic of Panama.⁷ The areas where this population group lives have the highest incidence of monetary poverty, 96.3 per cent, almost double the rate of rural poverty and five times more than urban poverty. In 2009, the level of births not officially registered in Comarca Ngabe Buglé was estimated at 47.18 per cent.⁸ The National Population and Housing Census 2010 recorded 313,289 persons of African descent,⁹ who represent a major segment of the poor population; they live in marginal urban areas in dilapidated housing and overcrowded conditions, with high rates of unemployment, violence and insecurity.

6. In terms of rights related to development and survival, progress has been shown through the decline in the maternal mortality rate. However, the greatest challenge to the attainment of Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals is found in the indigenous area Comarca Ngabe Buglé, which has a higher maternal mortality rate than in the non-indigenous provinces, where the rate is below

³ MEF (2009), Main results of the Standard of Living Survey ENV 2008, CGR-INEC/World Bank, Republic of Panama.

⁴ The Gini index considered in each case corresponds to the latest year for which data is available in the period 1995-2005, UNDP (2010), Human Development Index of Panama.

⁵ MEF (2009), Main results, Standard of Living Survey ENV 2008, CGR-INEC/World Bank, Republic of Panama.

⁶ MEF (2009), Main results of the Standard of Living Survey ENV 2008, CGR-INEC/World Bank, Republic of Panama.

⁷ CGR-INEC (2010), National Population and Housing Census 2010, Republic of Panama.

⁸ Electoral Tribunal (2011), Project Document to reduce under-registration of births in Comarca Ngabe-Buglé.

⁹ CGR-INEC (2010), National Population and Housing Census, Republic of Panama.

58.3 maternal deaths.¹⁰ With regard to infant mortality (Millennium Development Goal 4), the indigenous areas of Ngabe-Buglé, Emberá and Kuna Yala had rates of 62, 40 and 35 respectively,¹¹ compared with the national rate of 20.8 per thousand live births. At the national level, 93 per cent use of safe drinking water and 93 per cent access to sanitary facilities is reported, while according to the National Health and Quality of Life Survey 2007, only 62 per cent of housing in indigenous areas has access to safe drinking water and only half of them have some form of sewage disposal.¹²

7. With reference to secondary education, in 2008 a net national enrolment rate of 62 per cent was recorded; the repetition rate was 5.9 per cent and the dropout rate was 12.3 per cent. In comparison with national figures, the Embera-Wounaan area had a net enrolment rate of 23.7 per cent and a repetition rate of 12.1 per cent (13.9 per cent for men and 11.0 per cent for women), and the Kuna Yala area had an enrolment rate of 32.3 per cent and a dropout rate of 21.0 per cent (18.8 for men and 23.9 for women).¹³ The limited command of Spanish and curriculum methodology and content are factors impacting repetition and school dropout among indigenous children and adolescents.¹⁴ In the case of secondary education, access is one of the fundamental obstacles for indigenous adolescents of both sexes. According to data from the Child Work Survey 2010, there was a decline of 3.7 in the rate of child work. Among the boys, girls and adolescents who say they participate in economic activity (over 60,000), 69 per cent attend school, and there are no significant gender differences. In indigenous areas, 18 per cent of the total population between 5 and 17 years does not attend school, and out of this total, girls represent the largest segment (57 per cent).

8. The HIV prevalence rate in Panama is 0.9 per cent, and sexual relations are the principal means of transmission. According to data from the HIV/AIDS Epidemiological Monitoring System, the most vulnerable groups are pregnant women and their children and indigenous peoples. For pregnant women aged 15 to 24, there was a decline in the prevalence rate from 0.9 per cent to 0.3 per cent between 2003 and 2009. The aggregate number of AIDS cases in children under 4 for the period 1984-2007 was 272, and there were 146 deaths.¹⁵ With respect to indigenous peoples, the Kuna and Ngäbe people were second in the incidence of HIV at the national level. One risk factor is the migration from the countryside to the cities in the case of the Kuna people and cross-border migration between Panama and Costa Rica for the Ngäbe people.

9. In 2009, crime increased by 78 per cent (cumulative, compared to 2004). According to data from the Integrated National Crime Statistics System, between 2007 and 2009, the murder rate in the province of Colón, where a significant percentage of the population of African descent lives, passed that of the province of Panama. Criminal activity also rose in the districts of Panama, San Miguelito and Colón, where the highest number of gangs in the country are found (a total of 236 in

¹⁰ Republic of Panama (2009), Millennium Development Goals, Third Report of Panama, 2009.

¹¹ Republic of Panama (2009), Millennium Development Goals, Third Report of Panama, 2009.

¹² ICGES (2007), National Health and Quality of Life Survey, ENSCAVI 2007, MINSA/CGR/MEF, Republic of Panama.

¹³ MEDUCA (2009), Educational Statistics 2008, Republic of Panama.

¹⁴ CONADEC (2008), A document for action in the Panamanian educational system, Monitoring and Follow-up, Report to the President of the Republic, July 2008.

¹⁵ MINSA (2008), Health Statistics 2007, Republic of Panama.

2010). However, the number of adolescents and youth participating in them is unknown. Data from the same source reveals that violence related to youth gangs has led to a higher number of deaths in those under 18, as well as collateral victims caused by firearms and bladed weapons.¹⁶ While in 2008 only 0.5 per cent of murder victims at the national level were under 14 years old, those numbers are tending to increase.

10. During the last five-year period, the Government of Panama made a significant and sustained increase in social expenditure (investment in health, education and culture, housing and community development), reaching \$20.252 million. In 2008, for example, social investment represented 49.2 per cent of the Government's total budget. However, measuring the impact of this investment continues to be a challenge, since the budget shares intended for children and adolescents are not disaggregated.

11. The lack of autonomy of municipalities and local governments is a barrier to the development and implementation of public policy, given the limited territorial jurisdiction in decision-making, the weak framework for demanding rights, and limited access to management of financial resources. On the other hand, there is a need to strengthen competencies at the municipal level in order to develop risk management plans that take children and adolescents into account.

12. The reports of Panama to the Committee on the Rights of the Child describe the steps taken to adapt the legal framework to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.¹⁷ Nevertheless, among pending recommendations is the need for a law on an integral system for the protection of children, and the recommendation to report on the annual social expenditure which the Government allots for full compliance with the economic, social and cultural rights of children. The Committee expressed its concern at the hardening of the regime of criminal responsibility applied to adolescents, and recommended that measures should be taken to counteract them. Panama will submit its third and fourth report to the Committee in 2011, and will also report on the Optional Protocols to the Convention that were ratified in 2000.

Key results and lessons learned from previous cooperation, 2005-2011

Key results achieved

13. Since 2006, the cooperation programme has provided technical and financial support to the food and nutrition monitoring system of the National Nutrition Plan implemented by the National Secretariat for the Food and Nutritional Security Plan. As a result, delayed growth among first grade pupils has been reduced. In collaboration with the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) the National Plans on food security 2009-2015; combating micronutrient deficiencies 2008-2015 and to combat child malnutrition 2008-2015 were developed.

14. The Government has undertaken multiple efforts to put itself on the path towards achieving Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals. Technical

¹⁶ SIEC (2010), Number and percentage of homicides recorded in the Republic of Panama by year, according to age group: years 2007-2009, Republic of Panama.

¹⁷ Republic of Panama (2009), Millennium Development Goals, Third Report of Panama, 2009.

assistance from the cooperation programme has been key in strengthening non-formal pre-school education in areas of extreme poverty and indigenous areas through support to Family and Community Early Childhood Education Centres, which has had a positive impact on the national rate of pre-school enrolment. Universal access to education was reinforced through a scholarship programme for children who attend public primary schools (6 years) in order to prevent school dropout. Between 2009 and 2010, a new skill-based secondary education curriculum was developed for grades 10 and 11, and a new learning system was launched for middle school, together with an evaluation component. In addition, the National Intercultural and Bilingual Education Plan was launched at secondary level. Under this Plan, Act No. 88, recognizing the languages and alphabets of the indigenous peoples of Panama, was adopted.

15. Advocacy and technical assistance were essential to progress in public policy concerning HIV/AIDS. Since 2008, national coverage in HIV testing of pregnant women has increased from 36 per cent in 2006 to 75 per cent in 2009. Better technology and equipment has allowed PCR and DNA testing in the Comarca Kuna Yala and Chiriqui province; programmes to care for children infected or affected by HIV and AIDS have also been strengthened. With support from UNICEF and WHO/PAHO, in 2009 implementation began of the National Multisectoral Plan for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis (PMTCT) in Panama 2009-2014, and the Inter-Institutional Commission for PMTCT was established. The Ministry of Health strengthened its public policies on the treatment of persons with HIV/AIDS, establishing by Decree No. 7 of 22 January 2008 the National Commission for the Prevention and Control of HIV. It likewise improved its supply chain for antiretroviral medications, for a savings of approximately 1.5 million balboas.

16. Although there is no legal framework for integral protection that establishes the functions of the central government and the functions and responsibilities at the local level, the Panamanian Government made progress through the establishment of the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family. Another important achievement is the promulgation of a new General Act on Adoptions (Act No. 61 of 21 August 2008), which the Hague Conference recognized as progress. In addition, regulations for the opening, operation and supervision of institutions that care for children have been developed.

Lessons learned

17. The midterm evaluation of the 2005-2011 cooperation cycle recommended that UNICEF and its partners should concentrate their efforts on support to the formulation of public policies that benefit indigenous girls and urban adolescents from marginal areas, as the most excluded groups among Panamanian children and adolescents. This draft programme takes this strategic recommendation as a cross-cutting theme of the three programme components.

18. As a synthesis of this reflection, it was indicated that, as Panama is a middle-income country, it is appropriate to ensure policies, laws and budgets that have as a reference the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals with equity, in order to have an impact on excluded boys and girls. For this purpose, disaggregated, timely and reliable data is needed. It was acknowledged that the System of Indicators on

Children, Adolescents and Women in Panama is a tool that must be updated continuously. On the other hand, it is necessary to construct baselines that can be used in planning and monitoring of results. The challenge in the next cooperation cycle is to maintain the systematic production of qualitative and quantitative information on the situation of the rights of children, particularly the most excluded.

19. The evaluation also recommended that the Situation Analysis document (2010) should be focused on indigenous children and urban adolescents as a basis for establishing a joint agenda for action and attention to this population in the new cooperation cycle. Although the country programme for 2012-2015 is designed to contribute to poverty reduction and improve the quality of services available to all poor children in Panama, its objective is to guarantee that the most excluded will benefit.

The country programme 2012-2015

Summary budget table

<i>Programmes</i>	<i>(in thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Strategic information	883.4	1 570.0	2 453.4
Protection framework	795.5	1 430.0	2 225.5
Inclusion and reducing disparities	897.0	1 500.0	2 397.0
Cross-cutting component	424.1	200.0	624.1
Total	3 000	4 700	7 700

Programme preparation process

20. The preparation of the programme for Panama has been guided by the themes of the Social Strategy of the Government's Strategic Plan 2010-2014, the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period 2012-2016; in addition to the strategy to accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In the preparation of the programme, counterparts from Government and civil society participated in the elaboration of the Situation Analysis. The strategies for the new country programme were outlined in a series of consultation meetings with the participation of Government partners, multilateral agencies and civil society. Furthermore, there was a debate with the main partners in the private sector, in particular the communications media.

Goals, principal results and strategies

21. The programme's overall target is to achieve major progress by 2014 in the exercise of the rights of children and adolescents, through the strengthening of evidence-based policies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals with equity. To that end, the new cooperation programme will support national and local public institutions in adapting their policies and programmes to bring them in line with the principles expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and

the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Social alliances in favour of children will be promoted, contributing to the reduction of disparities, above all among the indigenous population and people of African descent.

22. The country programme has three programme components: (a) strategic information; (b) protection framework; (c) inclusion and reduction of disparities.

23. Programme strategies include: (a) development and strengthening of institutional capacities at the national and local level for planning, budgeting, execution and monitoring of social expenditure; and for the use of equity, gender and human rights perspectives in the formulation of an integral public policy for children and adolescents; (b) the establishment and strengthening of reliable and updated statistical information systems (disaggregated by gender and ethnic group) for evidence-based decision-making that includes the use of DevInfo, as well as monitoring of results and impacts; (c) the design of models for reduction of disparities based on local public policies that can be extended to the national level; (d) generation, communication and dissemination of information and analysis on the main tendencies affecting children's rights so that rights holders can demand them and responsible parties can meet their obligations; (e) the development of a joint advocacy strategy with the agencies of the United Nations system based on the principles of efficiency and effectiveness; (f) strengthening the communications media so that they provide information on the rights of children and the topics concerning them in accordance with the standards and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (g) continuity of the coordinated work with Government institutions and cooperation partners, in addition to the strengthening and establishment of new partnerships with key actors in the private sector and civil society.

Relationship of the programme to national priorities and UNDAF

24. The country programme is harmonized with the national priorities established in the Government Strategic Plan 2010-2014, which states as its priority themes for the social strategy: (a) building human capital; and (b) social inclusion. These two themes cover nine strategic targets which include, under the first strategic theme, quality education and job training with equal opportunity for men and women. Under the second strategic theme, the targets are eradication of malnutrition, with special attention to early childhood and pregnant women; expansion of safe drinking water coverage to 90 per cent of the country; increasing the coverage and quality of basic health services, emphasizing primary care and expanding the hospital network; access to decent housing; safe and efficient public transport; security for citizens and social protection for vulnerable groups, building the capacity of families through conditional economic assistance and a support network for the poorest and the elderly. The United Nations system in Panama is currently developing UNDAF 2012-2015 in cooperation with its Government counterparts.

Relationship of the programme to international priorities

25. The programme contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the third report of Panama (2009), the 2009/2010 recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women, the universal periodic review and the relevant treaty bodies, as well as the Education Targets 2021 approved by the Government of Panama. The programme is in line with the strategic role of UNICEF in middle-income countries.

Programme components

Strategic information

26. The strategic information component envisages the outcome that in 2015 Government institutions, with UNICEF support, will be making use of updated and reliable information disaggregated by gender, location, age group, ethnic group/race, etc., in support of decision-making in the process of formulating public policies with an equity and human rights perspective. The following intermediate results are expected:

(a) Monitoring of the country's progress in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals will be used to direct public investment to the most underserved geographical areas. To that end, a system of collection, analysis and use of statistical information at the national level will be established by common agreement, with specific emphasis on the most vulnerable areas and it will be made accessible for public use and consultation;

(b) The Observatory on the Rights of the Child will have established the capacity to monitor the situation of children and produce an annual status report, in follow-up to the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(c) The system of indicators on children will be used in decision-making on public policy concerning basic social services for children at the national and municipal levels;

(d) At least three universities are developing studies on equity in public policy centred on children. To achieve this, the institutions and their needs to build capacity will be identified.

Protection framework

27. The protection framework for children and adolescents component covers two results areas: (a) design and approval by the Government of a national strategy for integral protection of children which includes emergencies; and (b) design of poverty reduction policies for the lowest income quintile. The expected medium-term results are:

(a) The evidence generated from the mapping of the supply, focus and linkages of protection services for children and adolescents at the national and local levels becomes the basis for the formulation of a national strategy for integral protection of children;

(b) The governing institutions and operational bodies of the children's policy, at the national and local levels, have established a system of integral protection for children and adolescents, defining clear areas of competence among the sectors;

(c) The evidence produced from an evaluation of the social protection system and its impact on the reduction of child poverty becomes the basis for any necessary adjustments to the programme. To that end, consensus will be established on the definition of the indicators of child poverty that will be used by the Panamanian Government and will be incorporated in the analysis of the efficiency of social protection programmes;

(d) Government institutions will evaluate the impact of the national social protection policy in accordance with the child poverty indicators and will make any necessary adjustments.

Inclusion and reduction of disparities

28. The results of the inclusion and reduction of disparities component will be the strengthening of the public policy framework and the execution capability of government programmes at the national and local level in order to reduce disparities, prevent violence and take into account vulnerability to natural disasters; and to increase opportunities for the most excluded children, adolescents and women. The desired medium-term results include:

(a) Provision of quality services to children in the Ngäbe-Buglé and Emberá-Wounaan comarcas, based on data and monitoring of impact;

(b) Existence of a strategy in the offices of the Ministry of Education in indigenous areas to replicate the Friendly Schools model in 90 per cent of the pre-schools and primary schools in all indigenous areas. The model considers an intercultural perspective and vulnerability to natural disaster as cross-cutting themes;

(c) Design of a national strategy for adolescent development that takes into account the prevention of violence developed as a local model in Colón district;

(d) Some 50 per cent of adolescents in marginal urban areas will have access to information allowing them to develop life skills and decision-making concerning health, security and education. To that end, the local authorities of San Miguelito, Panamá, Colón and David districts will have decided to implement information models in their respective districts;

(e) In Colón district a programme of quality schools at the middle school level will be modelled, with the support of public-private partnerships between the Ministry of Education and local businesses.

Cross-sectoral costs

29. The cross-cutting component includes costs for programme, support staff and technical assistance in addition to a programmatic component. Its main result is that the situation and rights of children and adolescents become part of the social agenda of such actors as the communications media, socially responsible companies, universities and other social actors. This component includes advocacy and promotion of synergies for the equity agenda with other United Nations system agencies in such areas as the rights of indigenous peoples and people of African descent, a gender perspective, agricultural development, security sector reform, the environment and modernization of Government, among others. In association with the Global Compact and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, the

programme will contribute to the design of a social responsibility strategy for business that provides policy guidance on donations intended for social organizations or programmes for boys, girls and adolescents. This component includes resource mobilization activities for the programme.

Major partnerships

30. UNICEF will reinforce its cooperation with the Government through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Security, the National Statistics Institute and all the secretariats and councils established to implement public policy relating to children and adolescents in Panamá. It will collaborate with the Office of the Ombudsman in providing technical support to the Observatory on the Rights of the Child. The country programme contains important partnerships with indigenous women's groups and traditional authorities, organizations in the social movement of people of African descent, representatives of youth groups and non-governmental organizations, and also with religious groups working with children and youth. Partnerships with the private sector, centres of knowledge and the communications media will be strengthened.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

31. Strengthening of the information systems of Panamanian Government institutions and the generation of information by the Observatory on the Rights of the Child will provide better tools and processes for follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; to measure progress on key indicators, and in the identification of the social groups and territories experiencing the greatest social inequality. The cooperation programme will establish strategic partnerships with national and subregional academic institutions and with expert consultants who will support research, monitoring and evaluation of programme components and results.

32. As part of programme management, an effort will be made to add value by identifying experiences that can be integrated into South-South cooperation initiatives, to promote the exchange of experiences and lessons learned.

33. The situation analysis conducted in 2011 will serve as a baseline for monitoring and evaluation of the programme results for 2012-2015. A five-year monitoring and evaluation plan will be developed that will define follow-up mechanisms. Regular reviews of the programme will be conducted. The midterm review will be an opportunity to incorporate the necessary changes and adjustments to the programme.