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FOR ACTION

COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY NOTE**

Cuba

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country programme strategy note for Cuba for a programme of cooperation for the period 1997 to 2001.

The situation of children in Cuba has been adversely affected by a number of factors, including the embargo, internal factors and other external factors. Between 1989 and 1993, the gross national product of Cuba declined by 35 per cent. An effort to rebuild a more competitive economy, without sacrificing the country's tradition of equity and the high priority assigned to children, is under way.

In spite of the current difficulties, the country enjoys the best health and education indicators in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Most of the goals set at the World Summit for Children have been reached, although water supply and sanitation, low birth weight and micronutrient deficiencies still require special attention. The principal challenge is one of maintaining historical achievements in health and education for children. Institutional capacity-building for sustained service delivery is the central strategy in the programme. The tools for institutional strengthening will include support to the further development of social information systems at local and provincial levels, the introduction of alternative technologies and technical support for specific project initiatives. In circumstances of an acute shortage of resources, including convertible currency, UNICEF will continue to provide critical supplies to help meet the basic health and educational needs of children and women. The proposed country programme will comprise the following areas of intervention: health; basic education; water supply and sanitation; and social policy and programme management.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1996.

THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. The situation of children in Cuba has been adversely affected by a number of factors, including the embargo, internal factors and other external factors. Between 1989 and 1993, the gross national product of Cuba declined by 35 per cent. The long process of rebuilding the economy began in 1993 with concrete reforms to make it more competitive under new circumstances. At the same time, the political will exists to maintain a culture of equity and equality of opportunity, and the well-being of children continues to be of the highest priority. The National Plan of Action (NPA), prepared following the World Summit for Children, has become an important tool for decision-making. In 1995, each province prepared a Provincial Programme of Action (PPA) for Children highlighting local priorities.

2. In spite of the difficult circumstances, the country still enjoys the lowest infant mortality rate in the Latin American and Caribbean region, at 9.9 per 1,000 live births. Cuba has achieved the mid-decade goals for immunization and the control of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. Authorities are determined to continue improvements in health and are shifting the focus from complex hospital care to a new emphasis on primary health care (PHC). Micronutrient deficiencies persist: some 60 per cent of pregnant women and 50 per cent of children under the age of six years suffer iron deficiency anaemia, and there is evidence of vitamin A and iodine deficiencies. The incidence of low birth weight, at 8 per cent, is below the regional average (11 per cent). It had declined during the 1980s, but has been increasing slightly in recent years. Meeting the goals for access to water supplies and sanitation, particularly in rural areas, will be especially difficult because of the economic crisis.

3. Cuba has achieved the World Summit for Children goals for education. At 97 per cent, primary school enrolment is comparable to that of industrialized countries, and at 3 per cent, the rate of primary school repeaters is the lowest in the region. Although Cuba has a solid corps of educators, the achievements in coverage and quality are also at risk as basic educational materials become increasingly scarce. In preschool education, Cuba is now exploring the role of non-school institutions, seeking to expand coverage through participatory, non-traditional modalities.

4. In the context of the changes affecting Cuba, reaching - or, in most cases, sustaining - the goals for the year 2000 requires strengthening of institutional capabilities to analyse, monitor, evaluate and cost programmes and developing alternative ways to maintain social achievements. Managerial issues are becoming increasingly important, including strengthening of institutional capacities to generate and use information to improve the situation of children.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

5. The mid-term review held in November 1994 confirmed the relevance of the programmatic areas: health; education; water supply and sanitation; and planning and social policy. The proposed country programme will continue the same structure. However, the evolving situation will call for some new approaches. In health, for example, policy is moving away from an emphasis on hospital services to one of PHC, with the cadre of 28,000 family doctors serving in new roles as health managers, educators and care providers. In education, concern about the quality of primary education is leading to a system for monitoring school performance. Micronutrient deficiencies have drawn increased attention, as have the sanitary education components of water supply and sanitation programmes. In the area of planning and social policy, there is a growing demand for accurate and timely information on the situation of children on which to base programme decisions, particularly at the provincial level.

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6. Advocacy was effective when conducted as a dialogue between the Government and UNICEF on how best to improve the situation of children. The development of non-formal education for young children is an example, as is the new emphasis of the role of family doctors in PHC.

7. UNICEF supply assistance can be an important element of capacity-building. Computers were provided to facilitate monitoring of the World Summit for Children and mid-decade goals, but they also have strengthened capacity to assess, analyse and solve problems.

8. To date, gender issues in programming have not been addressed in a sufficiently systematic way. Priorities include closer cooperation with the Cuban Women's Federation (a nationwide women's organization) and expansion of the community education programme to include gender issues.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

9. Cuba's goal for children and women for and beyond the year 2000 is to sustain universal access to quality social services. The goal also includes a focus on equity, in particular, the NPA goals. Therefore, UNICEF support will focus on sustaining universal access to PHC, basic education and water supply and sanitation.

10. Institutional capacity-building for sustainable service delivery is the central strategy in this programme of cooperation. The tools for institutional strengthening will include support to the further development of social information systems at local and provincial levels, the introduction of alternative technologies and technical support for specific project initiatives. Advocacy and social mobilization will continue to be anchored to the use of mass media, schools, television and radio networks, as well as with the support of artists and other figures of Cuban culture.

11. Coordination of UNICEF support with the activities undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme, the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - in the context of the regular efforts of the United Nations operational system - will continue to be an important element of the programme strategy. In circumstances of an acute shortage of resources, UNICEF will continue to provide vital supplies to help meet the basic health and educational needs of children and women.

12. The programme will be coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration. Implementation will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources. Complementary support to the country programme will come from the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television and the Cuban Women's Federation. Monitoring and evaluation of programme impact, linked to the NPA and PPAs, will be conducted by the National Office of Statistics.

13. The proposed country programme will comprise programmes for health, basic education, water supply and sanitation and social policy and programme management.

14. The health programme will include components of promotion, education and preventive care. The objective is to reach and sustain the health and nutrition related goals of the NPA, including immunization, use of oral rehydration therapy, and reducing the incidence of low birth weight and micronutrient deficiencies nationwide as well as in each of the 14 provinces. With the new

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emphasis on the role of family doctors - each serving some 700 persons - the programme will include in-service training for the entire group of 28,000 over the five-year period. The family doctors will function as health educators and community health agents, and be provided with newly developed educational materials. The training will focus on maternal and child health as well as the special health needs of adolescents, including reproductive and psycho-social services. To reduce micronutrient deficiencies - particularly anaemia as a contributing cause of low birth weight - the local production of supplements will be supported. The elimination of iodine deficiency disorders will be addressed by the iodization of all salt produced in Cuba for human consumption, including salt produced for export. The programme will include improvement of the epidemiological information system to support management of the PPAs.

15. The programme of basic education is intended (a) to preserve the quality of the existing primary education system; (b) to reinforce and expand the system of non-institutional initial education; and (c) to broaden an ongoing community education programme on Facts for Life to include themes on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the environment and gender issues in the home and the community. A capacity-building strategy will be employed. Primary school teachers will receive in-service training aimed at preserving current quality standards. The existing education information system will be strengthened, and new methods for following up and evaluating school performance will be introduced. Support to initial education will include training and strengthening of supervision and management. Community education is designed to help parents improve their own skills and to take part in their children's education as part of an empowerment strategy.

16. The objectives of the water supply and sanitation programme include (a) increased service access in selected rural and suburban areas through low-cost technologies; (b) the promotion of hygiene education on a national scale; and (c) better awareness and understanding of the need for protecting the environment. UNICEF will provide capacity-building support in the development of appropriate water supply and sanitation technologies, expertise in sanitary and environmental education, and basic supplies for the construction of water systems.

17. A programme for social policy and programme management will provide overall support to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NPA and PPAs. This approach will help to promote practical ways to focus on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. UNICEF support also will contribute to national efforts aimed at innovative management in social programmes, including the better use of information for national and local decision-making. The social dimensions of the ongoing economic changes will be monitored, analysed and reported on with a view to developing a body of practical knowledge of the evolving situation. Technical support also will be provided in the costing of public health, education and water supply and sanitation programmes.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1997-2001 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	<u>General resources</u>	<u>Supplementary funds</u>	<u>Total</u>
Health	1 600	2 750	4 350
Education	1 200	850	2 050
Water supply and sanitation	2 000	1 300	3 300
Social policy and programme management	<u>200</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>300</u>
Total	<u>5 000</u>	<u>5 000</u>	<u>10 000</u>

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.
