

**United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)**  
Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board

**Template for delegations providing comments on the  
country programme documents**  
2020 First Regular Session

Delegation name: \_\_\_\_\_United States\_\_\_\_\_

Draft country programme document: \_\_\_\_\_Cuba\_\_\_\_\_

Delegations are kindly invited to use this template to share their comments on any of the draft CPDs being presented during the forthcoming Board session.

In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1, country programme documents (CPDs) are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. All comments received by the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board before the deadline will be made public on the Executive Board website, and considered by the respective regional office, in close consultation with the country office and the concerned Government.

General comments	<p><b><u>Strengths:</u></b></p> <p>Health, education, sanitation, human rights acquisitions that can help with quick implementation of activities/interventions</p> <p>Country context and knowledge are well defined with details and data</p> <p>Existence of database</p> <p>Existence of a network at all levels that can ease coordination and collaboration</p> <p>Existence of strong Government's implications</p> <p>Promotion of South-South Cooperation, with respect to Disaster Risk Management (DDR). Lessons learned can be shared especially with regards to building capacity for resilience</p> <p>Build on lesson learned from the previous country programme of cooperation concerning the effective implementation of the communication for development (C4D) strategy, for more efficient work with families and systematic monitoring of results at the community level.</p> <p><b><u>Other:</u></b></p> <p>Promotion of ongoing activities for waterborne diseases, water, sanitation and hygiene (not only during emergencies)</p> <p>The involvement of children in the programming phase could particularly lead to sustainable results in the fight to protect children from violence and exploitation</p> <p>Address violence and exploitation (punishments) in schools</p>
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	<p>What do they mean by Government-led administrative systems in the Monitoring and Evaluation component? Who are they? At what level will they intervene?</p> <p>Need of clear definition of roles and responsibilities in the monitoring system at all levels;</p> <p>In addition to alliance with the Government and other organizations, Could UNICEF seek Public-Private Partnerships?</p> <p>In addition to local private sector, it's worth exploring resources available in the Cuban diaspora?</p> <p>Concerned with UNICEF's over reliance on government statistics to measure progress? Too often government provide data that are not reliable for various reasons.</p> <p>The CPD mentions strategic alliance with other UN agencies, government institutions and civil society organizations. Does UNICEF have success stories proving that such partnerships have helped achieve outcomes in Cuba? Also, working with various government entities usually add layers of bureaucracy and thus impact timely implementation. It would be preferable if these implementing arrangements are streamlined to make implementation more efficient.</p>
<p>Comments on specific aspects of the country programme document</p>	<p>For paragraph 7 (page 3):</p> <p>“However, the persistence and intensification of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America restricts access to international sources of financing and affects the country, particularly children and adolescents.”</p> <p>Comment: Cuba's claim that the U.S. embargo limits Cuba's access to international financial sources and affects the country is false. Cuba continues to take advantage of other countries' willingness to lend, but poor economic management means it is unable to meet its debt payment obligations, leading to the accumulation of hundreds of millions in arrears. Cuba's economic and financial situation is the result of economic mismanagement on the part of the Cuban regime. Rather than focus on blaming the United States for its economic failures, the Cuban regime would do better to focus its efforts on much-needed reforms. While Cuba blames the United States for food shortages, under the regime's cumbersome and inept central planning system, annual outputs of basic crops such as sugar have fallen to rates not seen in decades. Actual exports from the United States to Cuba in 2018 exceeded US\$275 million (\$275,878,000) and have only increased in 2019. This year, U.S. exports to Cuba through September 2019 already exceed \$271 million (\$271,100,000). Since January 2018, the U.S. Department of Commerce has authorized over \$16 billion worth of exports to Cuba,</p>

over \$12 billion of which were food and other agricultural commodities. Of this, Cuba only imported 3 percent of what was authorized; the decision whether to purchase the products is up to the Cuban government. Since 2001, the United States has exported \$6 billion worth of food and agricultural products to Cuba. Other goods authorized included medicines, medical devices, telecommunications equipment, consumer goods, and other items to support the Cuban people, including children and adolescents.

19. “Growing and accelerated access to information and communication technology and social media exposes children and adolescents to a wide range of digital content and risks.”

Comment: We hope the Cuban government will allow all Cubans the right to access information and won’t restrict access for those who voice disagreement with the Cuban government.

For paragraph 21 (page 5):

21. “The financial and technological barriers created by low economic growth, the intensification of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States and natural disasters all affect the quality of health, education, culture and protection services.”

Comment: Cuba’s claim that the U.S. embargo affects the quality of health and education services in Cuba is false. The Cuban regime has unfortunately chosen to prioritize support for the illegitimate Maduro regime in Venezuela above the health of its own citizens, and repression of its people rather than their education. Rather than focus on blaming the United States for its failures, the Cuban regime would do better to focus its efforts on much-needed reforms. Actual exports from the United States to Cuba in 2018 exceeded US\$275 million (\$275,878,000) and have only increased in 2019. This year, U.S. exports to Cuba through September 2019 already exceed \$271 million (\$271,100,000). Since January 2018, the U.S. Department of Commerce has authorized over \$16 billion worth of exports to Cuba, over \$12 billion of which were food and other agricultural commodities. Of this, Cuba only imported 3 percent of what was authorized; the decision whether to purchase the products is up to the Cuban government. Since 2001, the United States has exported \$6 billion worth of food and agricultural products to Cuba. Other goods authorized included medicines, medical devices, telecommunications equipment, consumer goods, and other items to support the Cuban people.

51. “The component will build community and institutional capacity and promote protective spaces. Advocacy with institutions, communities, families, children and adolescents will raise awareness of violence affecting children and of the existing prevention and response mechanisms among decision makers, professionals from different sectors, institutions, communities, families and caregivers. The generation of evidence-based, contextualized educational and communication tools, together with training, will strengthen the culture

	<p>of the rights of children and adolescents, taking advantage of the opportunities created by the new Constitution.”</p> <p>Comment: The U.S. government is not aware of any new opportunities that have been created since the implementation of the new Constitution. The new Constitution, which was created out of a constitutional referendum that was undemocratic and flawed, simply enshrines one party rule.</p>
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**Response from the UNICEF Regional/Country Office**

**Introduction**

UNICEF appreciates the comments made by United States on the Cuba country programme document (CPD), the recognition of the inclusion of a robust situation analysis of children in the country and the incorporation of lessons learned from the previous programme of cooperation.

Please find below responses to the programme-related comments made on the CPD. UNICEF will continue to build on its longstanding engagement with Cuba, the strong implication and agency of national partners, and its joint work within a strengthened United Nations collaboration system with a reinvigorated resident coordinator system.

The comments are pertinent, timely and appreciated, and will serve to inform the ensuing and work-in-progress processes of elaboration of programme strategy notes, workplans and advocacy strategies.

**Response to comments from the USA under “Other”**

“Promotion of ongoing activities for waterborne diseases, water, sanitation and hygiene (not only during emergencies)” (paragraph 39 of the CPD)

This is pertinent. Notwithstanding the relatively high coverage and access to water, sanitation and hygiene services in the country, UNICEF will continue to engage and support the promotion of hygiene, sanitation and quality water intake including in a non-emergency setting. UNICEF will account for this important point in the programme strategy note of the programme component “every child survives and thrives”, and as part of the communication for development strategy.

“Involvement of children in programming”

UNICEF agrees on the importance of participation by children and adolescents in programing and results-oriented monitoring. It is part of a common undertaking by United Nations agencies and established in the common chapter of strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women (paragraph 25 of the CPD). In the context of the current cooperation programme, UNICEF and the Government of Cuba have agreed to promote the participation of adolescents in local planning and results-oriented exercises, which until now had been centralized in sectoral ministries. The participation of children and adolescents is also a cross-cutting strategy to achieve the expected results in education (paragraph 44) and protection against violence (paragraph 50) in the country programme. UNICEF will continue to emphasize this in its engagement strategies with the Government and the United Nations.

“Address violence and exploitation (punishments) in schools”

UNICEF recognizes the need to prioritize the protection against all forms of violence through the life cycle, through an integrated strategy that includes families (refer to domestic violence, paragraph 15),

caregivers and educators, including teachers. The programme component “every child learns” provides the core components of this integrated strategy that will be spelled out in strategy notes and engagement approaches, which include prevention of harmful practices (including punishment), capacity-building for teachers (including in rural areas), and advocacy. Paragraphs 41 to 44 of the CPD include relevant references that will be elucidated further in strategy notes, workplans and engagement approaches with partners.

“What do they mean by Government-led administrative systems in the Monitoring and Evaluation component? Who are they? At what level will they intervene?”

“Need of clear definition of roles and responsibilities in the monitoring system at all levels;”

“Concerned with UNICEF’s over reliance on government statistics to measure progress? Too often government provide data that are not reliable for various reasons.”

Government-led administrative system refers to data and evidence generated by the public institutions in the country. Data are central for monitoring, tracking and evaluating progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the child-related goals, UNICEF agrees that the nationally owned statistics and monitoring system must be built on functional administrative data systems. UNICEF will continue to work closely with national and United Nations partners to build sound and reliable nationally owned systems, while supplementing this with results of surveys such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

UNICEF will use different mechanisms to triangulate information to measure progress towards the expected results:

- Participation in the analysis of disaggregated data in health and education, which are the most relevant in the proposed programme of cooperation.
- Complementarity of quantitative information, with qualitative information to be collected through observation, interviews and focus groups during programmatic field visits. The CPD establishes joint monitoring visits between UNICEF and the Government (paragraph 60).
- Cuba is implementing MICS round VI and data will be available in February 2020. The survey has had close technical support from UNICEF and a rigorous quality assurance mechanism.
- Three evaluations have been listed in the costed evaluation plan that accompanies the CPD.

“In addition to alliance with the Government and other organizations, could UNICEF seek Public-Private Partnerships?”

“In addition to local private sector, it’s worth exploring resources available in the Cuban diaspora?”

UNICEF recognizes the importance of leveraging partnerships from private sector partners for child rights as illustrated by the Child Rights and Business Principles and the UNICEF change strategy of harnessing the contribution of business to programmes for children.

Given the political economy of Cuba, the role of the private sector is nascent, and UNICEF has not had experience working directly with the private sector in Cuba. UNICEF is aware of evolving overtures in the commercial and tourism sectors and will monitor these developments to explore possible engagement approaches with partners in these sectors. UNICEF will also continue to engage the Government to strengthen public sector capacities to strengthen State capacities for the development of legal frameworks, policies and systems for the protection of children’s rights in the evolving context.

The potential of the Cuban diaspora’s contribution to funding and partnerships will be taken up at the corporate level of UNICEF and discussed with UNICEF USA.

“The CPD mentions strategic alliance with other UN agencies, government institutions and civil society organizations. Does UNICEF have success stories proving that such partnerships have helped achieve outcomes in Cuba? Also, working with various government entities usually add layers of bureaucracy and thus impact timely implementation. It would be preferable if these implementing arrangements are streamlined to make implementation more efficient.”

Through its long-term engagement with Cuba, UNICEF has developed a programme of cooperation that is centred around key public sector partners delivering for children. Effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of our programmes as well as risk analysis and mitigation are at the core of our management priorities. UNICEF will incorporate in its various reviews the lessons learned in order to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. UNICEF also works closely with the other United Nations organizations in Cuba to harmonize approaches (including for resource transfers) and works jointly with development partners, mainly within the United Nations system. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the following joint undertakings with the United Nations and other partners in Cuba.

The inter-agency Sustainable Development Goals Fund (SDG-F) continued in 2017 to support the population in Santiago de Cuba in overcoming the severe six-year drought, with strong results in preventing childhood illness associated with poor hygiene conditions. An integrated approach to ensure that households and schools have better access to water and safe storage; raise awareness among children and communities about climate change and the need to adapt; as well as strengthen food security and weather forecasts are some of the programme components that UNICEF Cuba shares with the World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), key partners in this common undertaking.

Such joint programme helped in strengthening the resilience of families affected by drought in Santiago de Cuba, and catalysed partnerships with local institutions, WFP and UNDP to reduce the impact on children, enabling synergies and information-exchange and enhancing coordination.

It is also worth highlighting that in order to increase risk perception through multisectoral coordination within its road safety initiative, UNICEF Cuba worked with the National Road Safety Commission, the Ministries of Education, the Interior, Health and Transportation, provincial governments and the media. These actions, implemented through the education sector and mass media with financial support from the International Automobile Federation and Sherritt International (a Canadian resource company), 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 Sustainable Development Goal target on inclusive and resilient road safety.

As this partnership ended in 2018, UNICEF Cuba brokered a strategic partnership with the United Arab Emirates that will build on these past achievements over the next two years.