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**United Nations Children's Fund**

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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Short-duration country programme document****Ecuador***Summary*

The short-duration draft country programme document for Ecuador is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval. The Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of \$690,300 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$5,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period of year 2009.

**The situation of children and women**

1. Trends show that Ecuador has witnessed an increase in social investment and an improvement in some social indicators over the past five years. However, geographical and social disparities still persist. The income distribution gap between the poor and the wealthy is considerable: 10 per cent of the wealthy population receives 42 per cent of the national income, while 10 per cent of the poor receives a little less than 1 per cent. Poverty remains the main problem for the country, particularly in the rural areas where 54 per cent of the poor subsists. Three out of 10 children live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$1 per day, and 6 out of 10 are poor, living on less than \$2 per day. The most recent census showed that over 60 per cent of women are poor.

2. While the national average for child mortality in 2000 was 27 per 1,000 live births, the latest data provided by the National Institute for Statistics show that rates have declined, down to 22 per 1,000 live births. However, for the indigenous population, the child mortality rate is more than double the national average: 51 per 1,000 live births. A similar trend is discernable regarding chronic malnutrition; in

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\* E/ICEF/2008/9.



the province of Chimborazo, with its mostly indigenous population, the rate is 44 per cent compared to the national average of 21 per cent, down from 26 per cent in 2000. Seven out of 10 pregnant women, and 7 out of 10 children under two years, have nutritional anaemia. In addition, the HIV/AIDS prevalence among pregnant women is 0.3 per cent, which means that around 900 children are at risk of being born infected with HIV/AIDS every year.

3. An estimated 10 per cent of the children (approximately 400,000, aged 5-15 years) are not enrolled in school, and 1 out of every 3 adults is illiterate or functionally illiterate. The gap between indigenous people and the rest of the population is evident in the average years of schooling: whereas the national average is 7.3 years (2001 census), in the indigenous canton of Guamote it is 2.2 years for women and 3.4 years for men. Some 47 per cent of the adolescents (15 to 17 years old) do not attend high school.

4. Political instability is a challenge for Ecuador, and the country has had nine presidents staying in office for 2 years or less during the last decade. This institutional weakness has affected the rule of law. Nevertheless, Ecuador is beginning to witness an economic revival, mainly the result of an increase in oil prices and the remittances sent from abroad, and the country has initiated institutional and legal reform promoting the establishment of human rights councils. According to the Child Rights Watch, severe violations of children rights persist. Physical punishment is widespread (52 per cent national average and 66 per cent of indigenous children), the International Labour Organization estimates that 5,000 girls suffer from sexual exploitation, and official data on child labour published by the Ministry of Labour indicate that 662,664 children are working.

5. The new Government is putting forward an approach that emphasizes human development policies and stronger long-term planning. In 2007, the Government called a Constituent Assembly and opened a debate on social development, which has generated intense controversy and strong reactions from some corporate sectors. The process of institutional reform that started with an increase of 8 per cent in social investment has strengthened the National Secretariat for Planning and Development and the Presidency of the Social Ministries. It is expected that this new human rights perspective will be incorporated into the new Constitution that is now under debate. The Constituent Assembly could be an opportunity to advance children rights if a human rights approach is integrated into the new Constitution.

## The country programme, 2009

### Summary budget table

(In thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Institutional reform and social investment for children	140 000	1 000 000	1 140 000
Intercultural education for all	100 000	2 050 000	2 150 000
Health and nutrition	150 000	1 200 000	1 350 000
Cross-sectoral costs	300 300	750 000	1 050 300
<b>Total</b>	<b>690 300</b>	<b>5 000 000</b>	<b>5 690 300</b>

### **Reasons for the short-duration submission**

6. The year 2008 is a transition year. The Government of the Republic of Ecuador, which took power in 2007, called a Constituent Assembly that will end by the end of May of this year. Likewise, it has notified the United Nations System that it will update the National Development Plan, which is the main framework for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Additionally, the new constitution will be submitted to a referendum, which will lead to a presidential and legislative election process. For these reasons, the United Nations country team asked the Regional Directors to extend the current country programmes for one year and to postpone the design of the new country programme until next year. This has been accepted.

### **Goals, key results and strategies**

7. The objectives, results and strategies that were approved for the 2004-2008 period remain. The recommendations of the midterm review (MTR), made in May 2006, and of the country programme evaluation, implemented in 2007, will be incorporated in the objectives and plans for 2009. The focus on public policy will be maintained, with an emphasis on gender, interculturality (afro-descendants, indigenous people and migrants) and empowerment of the adolescent population. Collaboration with the private sector will be strengthened, with a focus on the promotion of social responsibility. In line with the recommendations of the MTR and the country programme evaluation, collaboration between local and national levels will be more closely coordinated and aligned. A priority in 2009 will be to ensure that the much-needed social reforms receive effective support through an appropriate balance between technical assistance, information and advocacy. The planned reforms will foster an increase in social investment and contribute to a better allocation of resources to realize the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the goals of medium-term strategic plan (MTSP), the objectives the Millennium Development Goals and the suggestions made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

8. These strategic adjustments support the priorities established by the National Secretariat for Planning and Development in the National Development Plan, for which UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are supporting the application of a human rights approach. They are also in line with the discussions held during the UNDAF process, and the requirements of the Ministries of Education, Health and Economic and Social Inclusion, which have initiated an institutional reform process. Initiatives will be promoted together with the National Secretariat for Planning and Development to strengthen the human rights-based approach to programming at the local level, as well as public policy evaluations that will contribute to the follow-up of the National Development Plan. The experience gained will be shared with other countries within the region.

### **Programme components**

9. The programmatic components will be maintained, with the exception of participative monitoring, which will be eliminated according to MTR recommendations. Objectives and activities regarding participative monitoring were already incorporated into the other components of 2007 as a cross-cutting strategy.

10. Subnational strategies will be implemented as part of national programmes to achieve a greater articulation between local and national levels. The subregional programme on PROINCLUSION will strengthen local work, interculturality, cooperation in border areas, and coordination and exchange among subregional and regional offices.

11. The component on Intercultural Education for All will support universal access to basic education for children and adolescents. It will also promote the incorporation of an intercultural approach, which will contribute to strengthening intercultural bilingual education, early child development (ECD) and the participation of the adolescent population. Support will be given to the Ministry of Education in its leading role for the implementation of the Ten-Year Education Plan, and initial plans will be set up with the Ministry of Education to institutionalize a life-skills curriculum into the education reform plans. The social mobilization of rights holders will also be supported. This component has three lines of action: basic intercultural education, ECD and child protection.

12. A number of results are expected of this component for 2009: 10 per cent of boys, girls and adolescents will have a greater access to initial and basic quality education (at least ten years of schooling) in accordance to the goals of the Ten-Year Education Plan; and 34,000 children in 1,200 bilingual schools will have access to quality education and to quality learning materials in indigenous languages. At least 50 councils and committees for rights protection address violations in school and promote children rights.

13. The component of institutional reform and social investment for children will continue to strengthen the institutional reform processes and support the appropriate legal framework for child and adolescent protection with an intercultural approach. It will provide technical assistance and advocacy to improve social investment and will support social monitoring of children and adolescent rights, as well as promote social agreement around the National Agenda for Children and Adolescents. This component will be developed through the following lines of action: institutional reform, child protection and social investment.

14. The expected results of the programme are the establishment of local rights councils in 70 per cent of the country cantons and corresponding committees for rights protection in 35 per cent of the national cantons. Currently, 130 out of 219 cantons have councils and there are 30 committees in the country. The component will seek to sustain the 8 per cent increase in social investment registered last year. Efforts will be made to create seats for adolescents within these councils and as part of the national decision-making process. Mechanisms will include follow-up of the social budget, consolidated in government institutions at the national and local levels. Further, a national system for protection, to be operational at the national and local levels in at least 30 per cent of the cantons in the country, will be set up to address severe violations of children rights (child labour, sexual exploitation, abuse, cruel treatment and exclusion due to migration).

15. The component of health and nutrition aims to achieve universal access of boys, girls and mothers to basic health services. It will provide technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Health in primary health care, family and community and will help to jointly sensitize and motivate citizens through the Observatory for the Rights of Children and Adolescents and local committees. It will continue to support programmes for the elimination of vertical transmission of

HIV/AIDS through social mobilization and by raising awareness among women, together with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. This component will be developed through the following three lines of action: health and child development, maternal and child health and health and special protection.

16. A number of results of this component are expected to benefit boys and girls: a 10 per cent reduction in the rate of neonatal mortality, which in 2001 was 9 per 1,000 live births; a 10 per cent reduction in the rate of chronic malnutrition and anaemia, which in 2006 was 18 per cent; and a 30 per cent reduction in the rate of vertical transmission of HIV/AIDS; some 20 per cent of newborns will be enrolled due to the early registration of births established by the health services network.

17. The main governmental partners for this short programme will continue to be the ministries from the social sectors, the National Institute for Childhood and Family, the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence, the National Women's Council, the Council for the Development of Ecuadorian Nationalities and Peoples, as well as municipalities and prefectures. Civil society partners will include citizen observatories, social organizations of indigenous people and afro-descendants, non-governmental organizations that promote human rights, organizations for children and adolescents at the community level, and corporations from the private sector. In line with the recommendations in the MTR, new strategic partners will also be included: the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (it has a strategic role in the Government and coordinates international cooperation together with the Ecuadorian Agency for International Cooperation), the National Council for Afro-Ecuadorian Development and the National Secretariat for Migration, as well as academic organizations and universities, which gain relevance in the context of strengthening technical assistance strategies. Similarly, partnerships with other United Nations agencies will be improved, including joint activities with UNDP and the United Nations Fund for Women supporting the monitoring of fiscal policy and the social budget. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, including thematic windows for migration and interculturality, will be implemented together with other agencies of the United Nations system. Relations with other agencies of technical and bilateral cooperation of donor countries, such as Denmark, Finland and Spain, will also be strengthened.

### **Supervision, evaluation and management**

18. Communications will be more closely aligned with the programme area for external relations through the completion of a work plan that has already been discussed, approved and fully financed by the office. Likewise, the subregional programme for inclusion will be aligned with the components of the country programme. Monitoring will be strengthened, and the evaluation of programmatic activities will be carried out with a focus on the new five-year period, so they can contribute to improve the planning of the programmatic activities.