

Executive Summary

National Human Development Report

Panama 2014



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



★ **THE FUTURE
IS NOW** ★

Early Childhood, Youth
and the Formation
of Skills for Life

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Prologue

Mahbub Ul Haq, the master of expressing simple though at times abstract truths about Human Development, remarked that the most obvious things are also the most difficult to see. He was referring in particular to the idea that the growth of the economy or, more generally, the development of societies, is not as we had been taught the result of impersonal forces but rather from the individual and collective actions of human beings.

Indeed, the growth or development of a society does not depend on its natural resources, market share, reserves, race, geography, religion or any of the several other factors that have been proposed as categorical explanations. The true wealth of a nation cannot be found in material things, for the true wealth is its people. The progress of a country is not limited to increasing per capita income, for development is the development of the people, by the people and for the good of the people. Thus, in reality, there are no developed countries but rather countries where people have developed themselves. The purpose of public policy is then not to increase material wealth but to allow all people to lead a more truly human life, that is, a life with more opportunities in which to grow and with the freedom to enjoy them.

These truths, obvious but nonetheless not always easy to see, are the inspiration of the Human Development paradigm and, thus, are the inspiration for this Report. The real wealth of Panama is the Panamanian women and men. The goal of public policy, both of the Panamanian government and society, is to allow more people to live ever more fully human lives.

If development is the development of Panamanian women and men, it is also obvious that this development begins with children and young people. Hence the title of our Report: *The Future is Now!* As Milan Kundera wrote: "Children and young people are not the future because someday they will grow up, but because humanity is going to become more and more like young people and children, because children and young people are the image of the future."

The future is now. Children and young people are our today but also our tomorrow, and Panama's tomorrow will be what we build by means of these children and young people. Working in, with and for childhood and youth in Panama is betting on the Panama we want, a Panama with freedom, prosperity and justice for all, a Panama open and admired by the world.

Panamanian citizens have reason to be proud. Panama is the Central American country with the highest Human Development Index; the Latin American economy that grew most over the last decade, thus achieving a substantial reduction in poverty and a marked increase in employment rates; it is, one could say, within our region the society most open to the world when measured in terms of foreign per capita investment, of the coefficient of imports/exports and immigration rates. In addition to all this, of course, there's the Canal and its expansion, which will maintain Panama's business leadership throughout the "Pacific century" to come.

Beside this thriving Panama connected to the world, there is also the Panama of informal workers and lower-class neighborhoods that grow around cities, the Panama of peasants, of indigenous counties, the Panama of communities of people of African-descent, the country of young people out of school and without work, the Panama of malnourished children. With a highly unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity, the fruits of progress have not reached everyone and there's still a long way to go to achieve the Panama we want, a Panama with enough for everyone and where everyone enjoys a full life.

The starting point is clear: we must start with children and young people in order to be equal, not only in the eyes of the law but also in regards to life. The Panama we want is, in fact, the Panamanian men and women we want. To educate people is to educate the country. It's not just a question of educating people to be more productive, either, as would the proponents of "human capital" would have it, the idea is comprehensive education for life in all its richness and its aspects, emotions

and friendship, family and community, work and creativity, a conscientious citizenship and culture in all its many expressions.

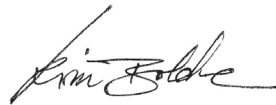
To educate people is to educate the country. This is the simple but powerful idea that the United Nations Programme for Development wants to offer to all Panamanians. To educate people means helping them become capable of a more fully human life in which they can realize their potential in all areas and contribute to the common good from all areas of the social order, including their role as a democratic citizen, a worker or a productive entrepreneur, as a member of a family, a neighborhood and a community where they build their life. Thus, in this Report we talk about training children and young people in life skills, children who are at the same time protagonists and beneficiaries of national development, who build and inhabit the Panama we want.

This is a Panama that, of course, depends on the world and is also committed to the world. Ricardo Miró put it better than anyone when he said: "In you were joined fraternal hands of two worlds/creating a Continent/.../because seeing you, oh Country, they'd said/that you were created by divine will/so that under the sun that illuminates you/are joined within you all of humanity." The Panama of two oceans, the navigator who has gone far but must go even further on a planet that has become both larger and smaller, a village of unimaginable opportunities but also of pressing environmental and social threats. A Panama whose insertion into the world cannot be reduced or rely on material gains, but instead must ensure that each and every Panamanian has the inalienable rights of an inhabitant, a worker and a citizen of this global village.

This Report does not purport to demonstrate opinions, cause disputes nor offer solutions. It is an open and we hope well-documented invitation to all Panamanians, without distinction of race, class or creed, to think and work harder and better to build a

future that already exists. More than a finished work, this Report wants merely to begin and to inspire a conversation that of course goes beyond its pages and goes beyond the particular details and debates. Based on a very solid knowledge of the country and the world—(neuroscience, personal developmental psychology) and tested in the field (with official statistics, measurements and surveys for this Report) we intend to show why the future of Panama depends on the education and utilization of the skills of its children and young people, why the future is now, where we are now and to where we can advance, learning from past experience and the best local and international practices. The conclusions, decisions and, most of all, the activities are in the hands of the attentive readers. The creation of life skills for children and young people is a responsibility and must be a commitment of the government, families, schools, employers, the media and, in general, of all social and political organizations together. It is to each and every Panamanian that this Report speaks.

The subject and focus of this Report emerged from many consultations with national authorities and our partners in civil society and the international community who, in one way or another, emphasized the importance of helping to create a better Panamanian for a better Panama. The writing of this Report was made possible by a group of leaders, scholars, colleagues and, of course, parents, young people and children from all corners of this country. To all of them, to those who are the future and those who build the future, I would like to express my recognition of them as coauthors of this fourth Panama National Human Development Report that we now deliver.



Kim Bolduc
Resident Coordinator of the United Nations,
Resident Representative of United Nations.



PART I

DIAGNOSTIC OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN PANAMA

PART I

I. THE WHYS

Childhood and Youth

Conventional wisdom says that “children are our future and the future of the children is the future of the world.” The mother who wakes up at four in the morning to prepare her daughter’s uniform and lunch¹ knows this. The parents who spend a significant part of their income to pay for a school they consider best for their child, at the expense of material and personal wellbeing, also know this very well. The aunt who, after a hard day’s work and three hours in traffic, finds the energy to read stories to her nephews because she believes it is important; the indigenous teacher who patiently teaches small children their ancestral language; and, in their own way, the mothers, fathers, caretakers, teachers, NGOs, governments and all those who work with children and young people, all know that children and young people are not only our future but the future of all humanity.

Nonetheless, many times the future is hampered by poverty, inequality, a lack of electricity or plumbing, and often it is unclear what the future depends upon. For this reason, and in order to help Panama to think about its future, about its main asset, that is, its people, this Report deals with early childhood and youth.

It could be claimed that this Report is about the lives of 1 million Panamanians (being that there are 1,029,676 people² aged between 0 to 5 years and 11 months old or between 15 and 24 years old), but in fact it is about all of Panama. This Report is about how what happens to the lives of 30% of the population can be decisive for the future of 100% of the people.

This future can and should be better than the past. The Panama Human Development Index is the highest in Central America and one of the highest in Latin America. Amid international economic turbulence, the country has enjoyed more than twenty years of sustained growth, the number of jobs has risen steadily and poverty has declined substantially. This, of course, does not mean that inequality, informal labor and widespread poverty do not continue to impede the human development of many Panamanians, starting with and including many children and young men and women.

This Report is an invitation to take advantage of the strengths to remedy the shortcomings in the human development of all Panamanians. The dream of a human, social, competitive and global Panama is

a real possibility. This Report argues that Panama is experiencing an important historic moment, with the institutional, economic, demographic and political conditions for a better future. There is no need to deny historic data, it is enough just to look at the recent developments in public policy and the conditions today to believe that a future of human development is possible for Panama.

Panama’s Future is Now

UA fully developed Panama is a real possibility, but for this the country needs to increase and integrate its efforts to educate its children and youth. Specifically, this strategy should focus on two priority groups: children in early childhood (0-5 years and 11 months old) and youth (15-24 years old) who need help to start their lives with dignity and hope. This Report examines how the long-term impact of investments in early childhood are the highest of all and how, nonetheless, in a short-term, immediate perspective, the future depends on the young. The Report also shows how these two moments of transformation in the lives of all, both early childhood and youth, are essential for the human development of a nation.

Panama’s Future is Now Because It Can Be Created Today

Panama has the resources and the institutional conditions today to carry out a sustainable, long-term transformation. With a gross national per capita income of U.S. \$8,100 (at current rates) it is one of the most economically privileged Latin American countries. 8.8% of the total public sector budget is allocated to education, a fairly high percentage in comparison to neighboring countries. The resources for investing in children and youth exist. The expansion of the Canal, railways, ports, air hub, telecommunications, construction, logistics and tourism are the economic activities that show the greatest growth and should generate abundant dividends for the future, ensuring the capital necessary to invest in childhood and youth.

Panama has today the necessary institutional conditions to adopt long-term plans and the laws required for a sustainable public policy future, such as the Route for Early Childhood Integral Attention. The

Panamanian government has today the leadership and specific legal instruments to guarantee the rights of young children and has the conditions to advance in terms of youth policies.

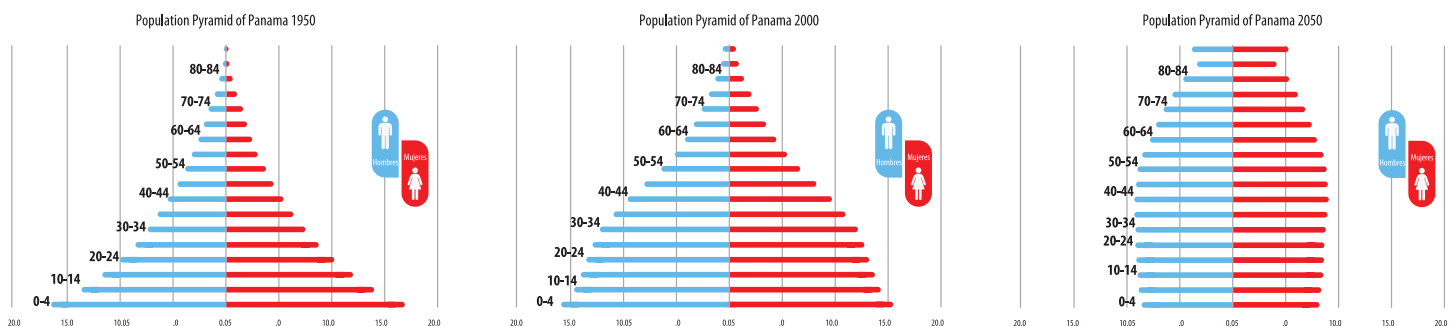
Panama's Future is Now Because Demographics Demand It

Just as it happened in developed countries, Panama is experiencing a demographic transition towards aging, with a youth population that is decreasing as a proportion of the total. As a result of the decline in births, during the last decade the relative growth of the younger age groups slowed down. However, according to projections, it is expected that children and young people will continue to increase their absolute presence until 2020, this year being the highest point for children aged 0-6 years old, with a projected decline from 2030 onwards. The population of adolescents and young people will continue to grow in absolute terms but at a slower pace, thus changing the population pyramid of Panama, as shown in Figure 1.

and their sense of morality and empathy³ which will continue to mature through adolescence. The scientific evidence generated by institutions such as the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and by eminent scientists, such as Professor James Heckman (Nobel Prize in Economics, 2000) from the University of Chicago, shows how the basic architecture of the brain depends *in large part* on experiences and on all that happens to children from pregnancy. Science says that investing in children and youth, investing in people when they are this age, is the most efficient in human and economic terms.

Youth is a period of great transformations that typically define the rest of life. The premature termination of school, teen pregnancy, unskilled work, exposure to violence or crime (as a victim or as a criminal) can affect in a negative way the life of a person and of the family that he or she may form later. From the perspective of human development it is important to recognize that:

Figure 1. Population Pyramid. Panama. Years 1950, 2000, 2050



Original Source: Comptroller, INEC. Secondary Source: UNICEF, 2011

Panama's Future is Now Because Science Says So

This Report highlights scientific evidence that proves that childhood and youth are unique periods in the formation of cognitive and socio-emotional skills essential for their whole life. It is in early childhood when children are more susceptible and responsive to stimuli and experiences that most strongly influence subsequent cognitive development patterns. It is in youth when the socio-emotional development of people ends and when the qualities that determine the inclusion or exclusion in areas such as school and work are defined.

By age 3 a child's potential for language and the main features of their personality have already been defined, as well as some aspects of their self-esteem

- The age of incorporation of young people into adulthood varies among cultures, among social strata and between ethnic groups. This age is different for different people.
- Emancipation or the act of "becoming an adult" is marked by a series of milestones (departure from school, a first job, the formation of a couple, living independently, etc.), and therefore youth should be thought of based on milestones rather than chronologically.
- Socio-emotional skills are also key to citizen behavior, including respect for the law, tolerance, civility, and the participation in community life, group projects and in the political sphere.

Table 1. Population Under the Income Poverty Line: Extreme, Non-Extreme and Total

Five-Year Age Groups	Extreme Poverty	Non-Extreme Poverty	Total Poverty
0 a 4	18.9%	24.8%	43.7%
5 a 9	18.1%	25.6%	43.7%
10 a 14	15.8%	24.3%	40.2%
15 a 19	13.8%	20.4%	34.1%
20 a 24	9.7%	14.9%	24.6%

Source: Elaborated from the Household Survey. INEC. CGR-2012.

Panama's Future is Now Because Investing in Children and Youth Today Means The End of Poverty Tomorrow

Many of the children under 6 years old in Panama are poor. An analysis of poverty rates by age group, with data from the latest Household Survey (Table 1) shows that in this age group, and up until 19 years old, there is a large concentration of individuals below the poverty line. It is clear that in order to reduce overall poverty in Panama investment must be made to alleviate these problems in early childhood and youth.

Panama's Future is Now Because the Economy Needs It

Panama is one of the most globalized countries in Latin America, one that has best inserted itself in the global economy and is most protected from international troubles. This mostly successful insertion into the global economy should be maintained in the future. With institutions and a legal system open to foreign investment and with the modernization of the Canal, Panama will continue to benefit from both trans-Atlantic and the growing trans-Pacific trade as the developing countries in the Pacific Rim begin to accentuate their leadership in a globalized world.

Economic growth has been reflected in employment, which has increased 45% over the past 10 years, reducing the levels of open unemployment to 3%, although this rate varies by age, sex and place of residence. The unmet demand for skilled labor has intensified competition and this demand is being dealt with by importing workers. The future economic growth of Panama demands an improvement in education and the training of its human resources in order to meet the employment needs in terms of the quantity and the quality required.

What does the market demand? According to several scientific studies⁴ and reports from consulting companies⁵, the current market demand for labor in the service industry offers a very high premium for socio-emotional (non-cognitive) skills. Thus, education that offers these so-called *soft skills* can have a high return

for young people who are entering the job market. Other studies show that socio-emotional skills such as self-esteem, motivation and self-discipline increase wage levels and economic success much more than success in formal education⁶.

Panama's Future is Now Because People Have Rights

In addition to being productive, development should also be human. But what does this mean? It is important that human development be participatory and equitable, that people are respected as subjects with rights and that they are not only beneficiaries but also agents of their own destiny. Thus, the future of Panama should be built now, and not only *for* the people but *with* the people. That means viewing children and young people as subjects of human rights and as individuals with values, priorities and autonomy. This also means viewing public policy as an area that not only makes governments responsible but also all citizens in their daily actions, as they have power to influence the future. Which is why it is so important to think about the *formation* of children and youth, a responsibility that depends on everyone.

Whatever age limits are used to speak of "children" or "youth," at every moment there are people who literally begin or cease to be children or to be young people, that is, new babies are being born continuously while other people are turning 6, 15 or 24 years of age. This implies that human development and the insistence on human rights must be understood as ongoing processes, which is to say, that human development is *sustainable* development. And it is not only a question of preserving nature for romantic reasons, but also to ensure that there is equity between generations, that our children and our children's children have at least as many opportunities as us. Sustainability is not limited to environmental issues but rather something that obligates us to have social institutions and practices in which the present does not destroy the future.

Formation of Childhood and Youth

When we talk about *formation* we are talking about more than just *education* in its conventional sense:

- First, because formation depends not only on the school or school system, but also on the family, community, religious and cultural groups, media, businesses and the work environment, the government and society in general.
- Secondly, because the training of people is not just about knowledge and reasoning but also about values and emotions. *Cognitive skills*, related to knowledge and logical intelligence, are crucial for the formation of people, but so too are the *socio-emotional skills* (also known as non-cognitive skills), characterized by values and attitudes such as persistence, tolerance, reciprocity, and otherness, among others.

A key theme of this Report is the urgency to invest in the formation of children and youth with emphasis on socio-emotional skills. The children who do not go to school, the teenage girl with an early pregnancy and the unemployed young man are all examples, among many others, of human, social and economic wealth which will most likely be lost for the future. But what can be done to change this reality? With the aim of helping Panama to think about the future of its childhood and youth, this Report carried out an original and innovative survey about the life of the country's children and youth that reveals some difficulties but also, at the same time, certain paths of action.



II. THE SITUATION

A New Portrait of Childhood in Panama

According to the most robust scientific evidence⁷ consulted by this Report, it is essential to think about the formation of children and young people by considering a wide range of variables. To begin with, it is important to understand that their formation doesn't only include the cognitive dimension but also the socio-emotional dimension (which is sometimes forgotten or neglected, as it is not the object of measurement or study in the educational system). After this, it is important to understand that the development of these dimensions depends on a large group of factors, such as the infrastructure of the home, the role of the family, the degree of *resilience* that the individual has achieved

(with 'resilience' being understood as the ability of a person to confront negative experiences and to recover without psychological, cognitive, emotional or social aftereffects), as well as the temporality of development. In other words, it is important to view the development of childhood as a qualitatively different process over time, defined by environmental aspects that have a different impact on sensitive periods of development, with childhood being a critical period.

Lastly, in order to appreciate the balance between risk and protection factors during childhood and youth development it is necessary to work with new measurement tools and from a slightly less conventional perspective. For these reasons, the Report chose to carry out a survey of childhood and youth in Panama (Box 1).

Box 1—Survey of Childhood and Youth in Panama

This Report provides X-ray vision about the situation of childhood and youth in Panama based on a nationwide survey sample of 1,708 random, residential (face-to-face) interviews, with observations, in a group of children aged from 0 to 5 years and 11 months old and with personal interviews of young people from 15 to 24 years old. In the case of the children, their care providers were also interviewed. All socioeconomic levels were included, with urban residents as well as those in rural areas (including three indigenous regions and nine provinces of Panama). The survey was conducted during the months of January and February in 2013.

The Report proposes four indicators to measure the degree of development of each of the four major interest groups: babies from 3-8 months of age, children between 4 and 5 years and 11 months of age, a group of children from 0 to 6 years and young people between 15 to 24 years old. All indices are calculated so that they yield values between 0 (worst record) and 1 (best). The main dimensions of the calculated indices are the cognitive and the socio-emotional development of children and youth.

The Survey considered four types of socioeconomic attributes: education, household infrastructure, household income and characteristics of parenting practices. The analysis evaluated how socioeconomic dimensions did or did not contribute to the development of each age group.

Summary of Novel Indicators of Development:

1. FDI (Family Development Index)

Index consisting of a sub-index of "parenting practices" and a "scale of emotional resilience."

2. BDI (Baby Development Index, 3-8 months old)

Indicator of 11 items dealing with the social and emotional development of infants, such as ease of smiling, feeding time and sleeping habits, among others.

3. IDI Index (Infant Development Index)

Index consisting of 33 items dealing with socio-emotional and cognitive (crude motor) dimensions of children aged 4 to 5 years and 11 months old.

4. YDI Index (Youth Development Index)

Index consisting of a sub-index of "socio-emotional development" and another of "cognitive development." Different from indices for children, these are indicators developed from more complex measurements and scales (48 items of the socio-emotional dimension and 17 cognitive items). Nonetheless, all indices follow the logical matrix of this Report, as described in the next chapter.

Table 2 presents the provinces and counties ordered from best to worst in terms of each development index. In the panel below, numerical values are related, and as can be seen they vary a lot between regions and between

analysis groups, from a maximum of 0.82 in the case of babies in Chiriquí to a minimum of 0.15 among young people in Emberá-Wounaan county.

Table 2. Index of Family Development (FDI), Babies (BDI), Infancy (IDI) and Youth (YDI), by Provinces and Counties

Provinces and Counties	FDI	BDI	IDI	YDI	Socio-emotional YDI	Cognitive YDI
Bocas del Toro	0.46	0.71	0.62	0.44	0.56	0.32
Chiriquí	0.57	0.82	0.69	0.50	0.58	0.43
Coclé	0.48	0.76	0.77	0.47	0.56	0.38
Colón	0.56	0.75	0.74	0.52	0.64	0.40
Guna Yala	0.36	0.63	0.68	0.39	0.51	0.26
Emberá Wounaan	0.60	0.54	0.47	0.31	0.47	0.15
Ngäbe Buglé	0.47	0.46	0.49	0.33	0.46	0.19
Darién	0.58	0.73	0.67	0.44	0.54	0.34
Herrera	0.64	0.72	0.68	0.51	0.59	0.42
Los Santos	0.54	0.58	0.76	0.57	0.64	0.50
Panamá	0.63	0.76	0.80	0.59	0.69	0.49
Veraguas	0.54	0.75	0.74	0.52	0.65	0.40

The different provinces and counties can be ordered from best to worst in the different indicators:

Order	FDI	BDI,	IDI	YDI	Socio-emotional YDI	Cognitive YD
1	Herrera	Chiriquí	Panamá	Panamá	Panamá	Los Santos
2	Panamá	Coclé	Coclé	Los Santos	Veraguas	Panamá
3	Emberá Wounaan	Panamá	Los Santos	Veraguas	Colón	Chiriquí
4	Darién	Colón	Colón	Colón	Los Santos	Herrera
5	Chiriquí	Veraguas	Veraguas	Herrera	Herrera	Veraguas
6	Colón	Darién	Chiriquí	Chiriquí	Chiriquí	Colón
7	Veraguas	Herrera	Guna Yala	Coclé	Bocas del Toro	Coclé
8	Los Santos	Bocas del Toro	Herrera	Darién	Coclé	Darién
9	Coclé	Guna Yala	Darién	Bocas del Toro	Darién	Bocas del Toro
10	Ngäbe Bublé	Los Santos	Bocas del Toro	Guna Yala	Guna Yala	Guna Yala
11	Bocas del Toro	Emberá Wounaan	Ngäbe Bublé	Ngäbe Bublé	Emberá Wounaan	Ngäbe Bublé
12	Guna Yala	Ngäbe Bublé	Emberá Wounaan	Emberá Wounaan	Ngäbe Bublé	Emberá Wounaan

Almost all children in Panama are cared for by their families and their mothers (66% of caretakers are mothers, 17% grandparents, 7% uncles and 3.6% fathers). A very high number (90%) of caretakers no longer study. The vast majority lives in nuclear families, but 22% of parents do not live with the child. This Report found evidence that various factors exert great influence on development at different stages of people's life. Based on the new indicators derived from the Survey (Table 1) it is possible to suggest that:

Babies

- The development of babies from 3 to 8 months is strongly associated with the infrastructure of households.
- From ages 4 to 5 months, 51% of babies are not able to assume the sitting position with support when someone puts them in this position.
- From ages 6 to 9 months, 25% of babies cannot sit alone without assistance.

The statistical analysis of the Survey data shows that, during the first months of life, the development conditions of infants rely more on the infrastructure of the home where they live, especially the availability of drinking water and electricity. It is interesting to note that among the babies who do not crawl, 16% live in homes with a dirt floor. The presence of "development gaps" amongst babies suggests that there is already something that public policy can do from a very early age.

Children Between 1 and 3 Years Old

- More than half (58%) of children aged 12 to 23 months reached the maximum value in the development indicator based on cognitive-gross motor variables. There is a strong correlation (factor 0.35) of children who had a lower score with the proportion of caretakers who do not teach them letters, words or numbers.
- From 2 to 3 years of age, 43% of children do not know how to draw sticks or balls, and 32% cannot answer a simple question like "What do you do with your eyes?" when it is expected that all should know.
- From 3 to 4 years old, 26% do not jump on one foot without assistance, indicating an insufficient degree of gross motor development.
- From 3 to 4 years of age, 31% of children do not recognize (cannot name) any color. In rural areas the figure is as high as 66%, suggesting that cognitive lags originate early on and

are associated with lack of adequate stimuli throughout the life of the children and tend to transform into other types of inequality.

These results may be due to the lack of stimulation, opportunities to play or from not going to preschool. As the statistical analysis of the Survey shows, the situation of children who fail to learn the basics early on is related to their family structure, parental practices and household income.

Children Between 4 and 5 Years Old

- The development (both cognitive and socio-emotional) of children in this age group is 12% higher when the mother is the caretaker⁸. However, this improvement increases to 46% when caretakers are grandparents⁹, which may be due to greater availability of time (more attention to the children) and experience.
- From 4 to 5 years and 11 months old, 67% cannot write their own name and 33% cannot write any letter. Part of this can be explained by the fact that 42% of children in the sample did not attend preschool. Here it should be noted that the estimated value in a sample does not necessarily coincide with that which a census might indicate or with administrative statistics from the education sector, although the data from the Survey is almost identical to which the Comptroller reported for 2011 (41.8% of children did not attend preschool).¹⁰

Several children behaviors are explained by parenting practices. From between 4 and 5 years and 11 months old, 35% of children do not do what their parents ask them and only rarely or sometimes obey rules. It is also worth noting that only 32% show interest or concern for the feelings of others. In this age range the impact of parenting practices and family resilience is very significant, while poverty and infrastructure have far less an impact than among younger children.

In fact, some of the figures from the Survey point to significant lags among children, thus implicating public policies aimed at specific actions. Not all, however, should be blamed on the government. There is no doubt that much of what happens to young children is the responsibility mainly of the parents and their families. Therefore, understanding the role of parenting styles and practices is key to coming up with integrated strategies for children and youth development.

Families

- Panamanian families have more rules or routines about the time that children should go to sleep (69%) than about the television

programs they can watch (57%) or about the amount of hours of computer and television use (39%). The percentage of families who have rules about what types of food their children can eat (only 40%) is even less. In general (and despite the fact that the Survey could only investigate a limited set of behaviors), it can be said that there are indications that few rules are used for young children in Panama.

- There are few books in Panamanian households, and 26% of children do not even have a picture book at home. Thus, it seems natural that 45% of children aged between 4 and 5 years and 11 months in Panama do not read a book a month at home. Part of the problem may be the lack of books published in indigenous languages, as that number becomes 83% for children in the region of Guna Yala, or because parents do not know how to read or can't read very well.
- Even within an oral culture, there is evidence that 39% of families did not tell any story to their children during the last month (a percentage that rises to 46% when referring to last week).

The statistical studies carried out by this Report confirm a strong influence of parenting practices and family resilience on the development of children. Similarly, other instruments and other impacts measured in the Report show how the lack of involvement of caretakers in the lives of children has a significant impact on their development. To simplify, we created a children's story called "Do-Dos and Don't-Don'ts" as described in Box 2.

Box 2 – "Do-Dos and Don't-Don'ts"

The "Do-Dos" are those between the ages of 4 and 5 and 11 months old that "do" go to preschool and to whom their caretakers "do" offer important stimulation, such as teaching them letters, words and numbers. On the other hand, "Don't-Don'ts" are those of the same ages that "don't" go to preschool and "don't" receive important stimulation from their caretakers.

Thus, among the "Do-Dos," 55% have a cognitive level of development superior to 0.8 (on a scale from 0 to 1) while amongst the "Don't-Don'ts" only 3% achieve this level (with more than 96% below 0.6). These two factors are important for the development of children in Panama. The participation of the family caretakers in the children's learning is fundamental even when they have access to preschool education.

While the first "do" only deals with one variable (going or not going to school), the second is a group of positive parental practices, in which not only teaching letters, words and numbers are included, but also playing with the children, having books in the house, drawing and working together, going to the market together, involving the children in housework and other tasks. This shows that the global activities of the family and the school create a synergy that is fundamental for promoting children's full development.

A New Portrait of Youth in Panama

The concept of youth cannot, of course, be reduced to age, for it also evokes the social and cultural features that distinguish new generations and mark the current meaning or direction and the future of every country. Young people act, they are not merely adults-to-be but rather protagonists of a history that is always open-ended. The concept of youth also has a gender dimension. For example, in Malawi and Mozambique, boys and girls would respond differently to the question when adulthood begins. Boys would answer: "When school ends and work begins," while girls would answer: "At puberty."¹¹ Economic factors can also

prolong youth, when, for example, many young men have difficulty finding work and having money in order to become independent of their families¹². Thus, while on one hand working can be used as an indicator of the end of youth, on the other hand it is very imprecise because many young people are underemployed or unemployed.

What's more, discussions about youth in different countries are often dual or ambivalent, as they go back and forth between positive perceptions and negative stereotypes. Young people are seen as gang members or victims, as threats or threatened, as an unemployed mass or as human capital. In developing countries, young people are the majority of the population but

also constitute the bulk of the marginalized. It is not uncommon to find social programs for young people that attempt to transform them from a threat into a productive and positive force in society, although this approach has the risk of exploiting young people in benefit of others and not the young people themselves. Often the exclusive emphasis on youth makes the mistake of ignoring the unjust structures in which they live. For this reason, it is important to talk about youth development within a broader perspective. From the point of view of Human Development, it is essential to empower young people in relation to important dimensions of personal development, such as education, work, sexual and reproductive health and violence.

It is, therefore, a challenge to think about the meaning of youth, even if in practice there is an operational definition of between 15 and 24 years old in which to gather information about these people. Based on these ages, and to better appreciate the diversity of Panamanian youth, in this Report we use three main sources of information: official statistics on youth issues, the aforementioned Survey on cognitive and socio-emotional development of youth between 15 and 24 years old (Table 1), and a series of structured consultations with focus groups of young people from different social backgrounds in order to explore their perceptions and opinions about various topics dealt with in the Report.

There are profound differences between young people from different backgrounds or different paths, as family poverty, low levels of education, dropping out of school, poor quality education, technological gaps, machismo, early pregnancy and similar factors or circumstances can lead to precarious employment, the situation of “NiNis,” (a Spanish expression for those who neither work nor study) or a poor participation of youth as citizens.

Judging by the evidence of the Survey, the characteristics of young Panamanians appear to be quite different between the two age subgroups. 63% of young people are currently studying, but when separated by age we find that from age 15 to 19 years old 81% study, while from 20 to 24 years old only 44% are still studying. Among those who are full-time students (without any other main activity) these numbers drop to 74% for those between 15 and 19 years and 26% for those between 20 to 24 years old. Similarly, 81% of the youth interviewed are single, but among those between 15 to 19 years it is 94% while between 20 to 24 years it is only 68%. Similar differences exist for other socioeconomic variables included in the Survey.

Some facts that stand out in the Survey:

- Young Panamanians use communication technologies quite intensively: 80% use the cellphone every day or almost every day and

74% use the Internet. However, there is great socioeconomic inequality, for in the highest strata 90% use the cellphone every day while in indigenous areas only 44% use it.

- Most young people (55%) do not read newspapers or magazines daily, but 36% watch more than 3 hours of television or movies each day.
- On average, in the cognitive tests conducted by the Survey, 87% of youth had scores below 6 (on a scale of 1 to 10). Only 13% scored over 6 points. These deficiencies demonstrate that there is much to be done to educate young people in Panama.
- Young women had better results than men of their same age on cognitive tests, averaging 69% for temporal cognition as opposed to 60% for young men, and 54% for spatial cognition versus 51% for men.
- Young Panamanians are participatory: 74% participated in at least one community, religious, sports, student or environmental organization during the last year.
- The perception of youth violence makes 73% of young men avoid walking on certain streets or areas in fear, 57% have limited the hours they go out, and 14% feel less secure in their own home. Women show higher values, 76%, 64% and 16%, respectively.
- On the other hand, 91% of young people say they are very satisfied with life and 90% believe that in 10 years it will be even better.

The impossibility to complete primary education is a major cause of delay in the cognitive development of young people (those who do not complete elementary school have a 67% lower cognitive development). On the other hand, development is 30% higher for those with a high school education. All this is reflected in the YDI proposed by this Report, which have as the most influential positive elements a high school education (+25%), infrastructure (+37%) and high income (over \$1,000 per month) (+22%) and as negative aspects poverty (-28%) and not studying beyond primary school (-53%). Parenting practices are a key determinant of the development of young children, but are in themselves influenced by a minimum level of education and family income. Young Panamanians are engaged in a vicious circle of underdevelopment that can only be reversed through a consistent investment in their formation.

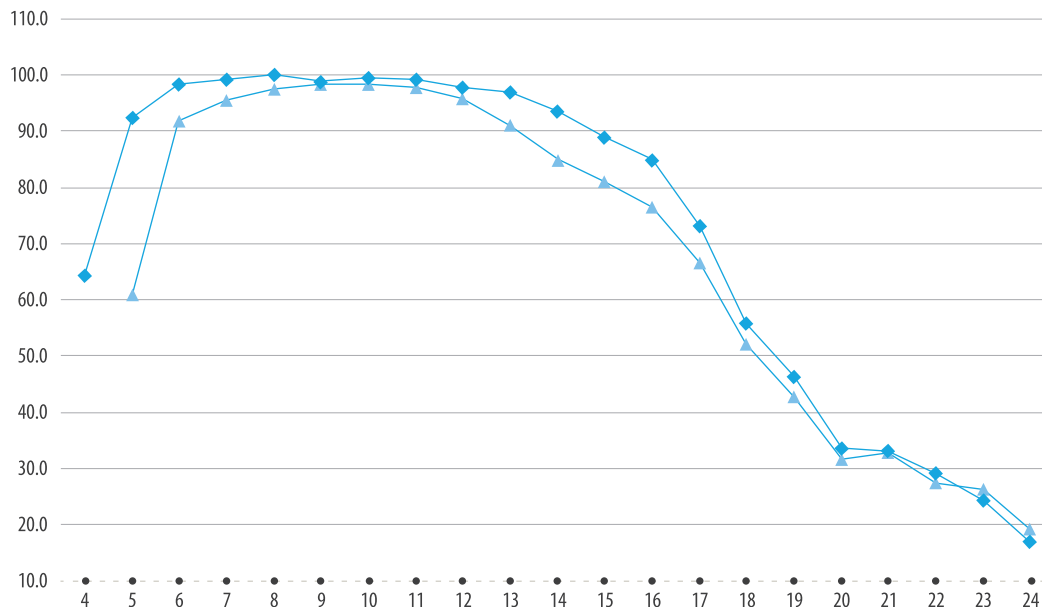
In regards to education, official figures show that with the expansion of coverage for junior high school, school attendance has increased for those between 13 and 17 years old, but desertion and repeating years¹³ remain high. Also of special interest is the fact that the enrollment rates between 18 and 24 year olds had not increased between 2002 and 2012 (Figure 2), meaning

that opportunities for access to basic education had improved but not for higher education. This figure is very relevant to understanding the situation of young people in Panama. Many young people leave school prematurely, often because they do not believe that school will be helpful. Being that it is a transitional stage, youth is a time of discovery, when passions, interests and skills are being developed that offer the

problem in the labor market, perhaps because of the fact that employers require years of experience to engage new workers. The experience requirement (and some additional training) appears to be fulfilled around 25 years old, when the unemployment rate drops by half.

What's more, many of the jobs that young people manage to find are not good quality. In fact, by the year 2010, 48.2% of those between 15 and 24 years old

Figure 2. Percentage of School Attendance by Age. 2002 and 2012



Source: Compiled from the Household Survey, INEC. CGR.

highest growth potential for development, but often the rigidity of educational systems does not make room for the young to benefit from other forms or other areas of education and personal growth.

In Panama, there is, of course, a wide range of institutions and programs dedicated to technical training or specific education for the world of work. But this offer is quite uneven, poorly organized and isn't integrated with the rest of the system by building bridges to facilitate mobility between different learning modalities. Students entering vocational training are still not yet able to continue to higher levels without completing formal secondary education and, thus, a college education remains the only attractive alternative for students and their parents. It is important to note that in developed countries only a small proportion of university students come from high school, the rest do so through specialized, high-quality technology centers.

On the other hand, although the unemployment rate has been dropping in Panama (it currently fluctuates around 4%), unemployment among young people is almost three times higher (about 11%). This suggests that beyond the short-term, there is a structural

problem in the labor market, perhaps because of the fact that employers require years of experience to engage new workers. The experience requirement (and some additional training) appears to be fulfilled around 25 years old, when the unemployment rate drops by half.

who worked were working in the informal sector. It is true that informal work was higher (53.3%) in 2008, but between 2000 and 2010 the proportion of low-income workers increased, implying that poor quality jobs remain a key concern when dealing with Panama's young people.

The employability of young people is a measure of success not only of the country's school system but also of the families and young people. Good employability can be the key to a successful career path and to accumulate the best experiences. On the contrary, bad employability or low quality employability may limit young people to a reduced or unsatisfactory range of options.

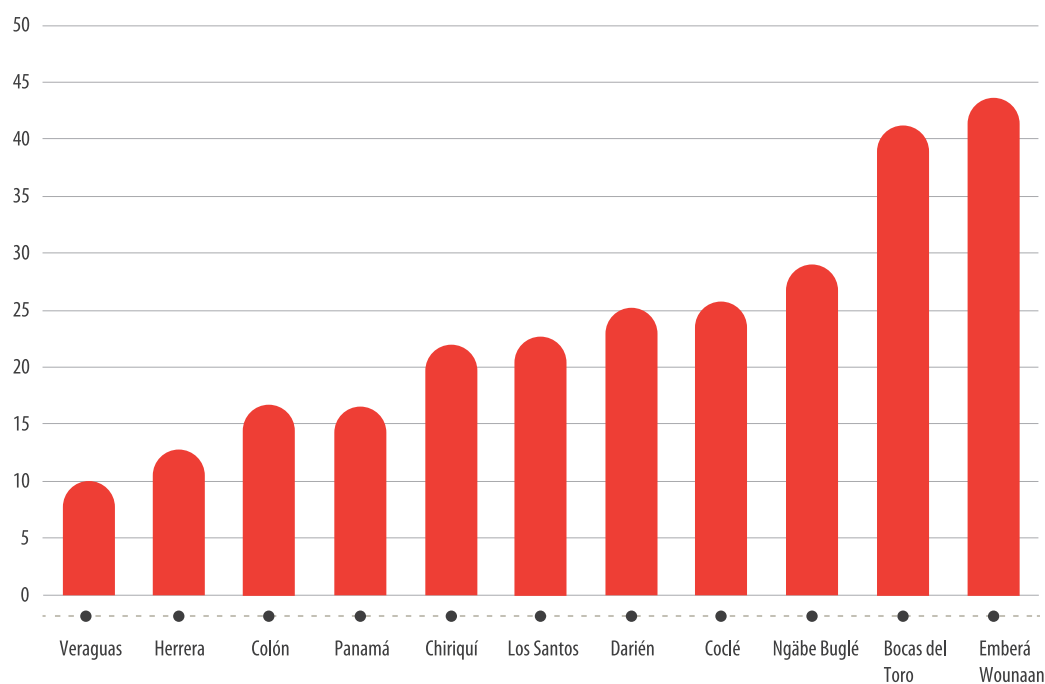
No less worrisome, one of every three women between 15 and 19 years of age left school without completing junior high school in order to devote themselves to housework. The main reasons for interrupting their studies are, as they themselves reported¹⁴, the need to work to make money (24.2%), a lack of interest in school (22.4%), the burden of household chores (18%) and premature pregnancy (11.1%).

According to the Survey on Sexual and Reproductive

Health (ENASSER 2009), the fertility rate for teenagers is 82 (per thousand women), and is highest in indigenous areas, followed by rural and then urban areas. As was expected also, the rate is higher among women from the ages of 20 to 24 than among women between 15 and 19 years old, and yet the proportion of adolescent girls between 15 and 19 years old who have gotten pregnant ranges from 10% in Veraguas and 43.6% in the Emberá-Wounaan county (Figure 3). The problem of early pregnancy among young women is that it is associated with other vulnerabilities. Many teenage mothers live in poverty, have low levels of education, receive less

prenatal and postnatal care and are less prepared for motherhood, with insufficient knowledge about the development and care they themselves require during pregnancy and after the birth of the baby¹⁵. Studies suggest that teenage mothers are less prepared to take on motherhood and, as a result, are less sensitive to the needs of their children at early ages. Other studies reveal that the interaction between adolescent mothers and their babies is poor and less stimulating (they play less and verbalize and smile less with their babies) and offer less expressions of love¹⁶.

Figure 3. Have you ever been pregnant? Women between 15 and 19 years old by province and county (%)



Source: Compiled From ENASSER 2009. ICGES.

Many young people are sexually active and the lifestyles of those who practice sex have an impact and repercussions in later life. One concern is the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). In the case of the latter, in 2011 the Gorgas Memorial Institute conducted research of 5,000 sexually active women who voluntarily took a HPV test. The study revealed that 47.78% of the patients had an HPV infection, with a greater prevalence among young women between 15 and 19 years old, young women who could develop cervical cancer and infertility that would affect their relationships and family life.

In both the Survey and the focus group, young people expressed great concern about the problem of insecurity. Many young women suffer domestic violence at home, dating, at work or in public places. Young men, meanwhile, are often criminalized because of stereotypes that associate them with gangs, drug trafficking, a supposed predisposition to be related to crime, or from differences in their value and belief system from that of adults. And yet, as suggested by Box 3, young men tend to be victims of crime and violence rather than victimizers.

Box 3. Young People: Victims or Victimizers?

There is ample evidence that young people suffer much of the violence in our country. To mention just some:

1. According to the Ministry of Public Security, 45% of homicide victims between 2007 and 2012 were 18 to 29 years old men.¹⁷ In 2012, one in three homicides of people between 10 and 14 years of age was from causes related to organized crime.¹⁸ Between 2002 and 2010, of a total of 4,430 reported homicides there were 417 with victims under 17 years old, that is, 9.41% of the total, with an increasing trend for the group between 10 and 17 years.¹⁹ In 2012, six homicides of children under 9 years old were reported, 9 homicides between 10 and 14 years old, 55 between 15 and 17 years old, and 186 between 18 and 24 years old were recorded. In total, 256 (38%) of persons aged 0 to 24 years old, of whom 13 were women.
2. Young people suffer many forms of violence that is difficult to measure. For example, according to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), for every murder of a young Latin American there are between 20 and 40 non-fatal victims of the same age who require medical attention.²⁰ Statistics from St. Thomas Hospital recorded medical attention to 6,804 people as a result of various forms of violence in 2012. There are no figures for other health centers, but following the criterion of PAHO, there should be about twenty thousand young people who needed medical attention as a result of violent acts.
3. Young people are victims of imprisonment. In May 2013, there were 487 teenagers held in detention centers across the country, of which 164 (34%) were serving sentences and 323 (66%) were in preventive custody, all of them for violent crimes. There are only 37 adolescents serving sentences for the crime of homicide and 78 under investigation. The largest number of young people serving time in the period 2010-2012 is for robbing people, armed robbery and homicides. 64% of the teenagers serving time are in the province of Panama.
4. As regards the rest, according to a study in 2002 by the Integrated Criminal Statistics System, [SIEC] of every 5 teenagers in trouble with the law who enter a detention center consume drugs and half of these committed offenses under their effects.²¹ Drug and alcohol consumption also acts as a trigger factor in cases of domestic violence, and thus the institutions responsible for prevention should pay more attention to this fact.

Contrary to popular belief and to the image that the media usually conveys, the statistical data tells us that neither the magnitude nor the increase in juvenile crime rates is high.





PART II

Early Childhood Policies

PART II

III. ROUTES

Early Childhood Policies

Many public policy recommendations emerge directly and naturally from the statistical analysis we summarized earlier, such as investing more in infrastructure in homes where children under eight months live, supporting parents in single-parent families, or simply encouraging families with children to read books or tell children stories. This Report, however, is not so concerned with specific policies or strategies but rather how we should view them in an integrated way and as government policy. In fact, there is a process underway in Panama of consolidating government policy of early childhood, and a similar one should be undertaken in regards to youth, as well. It is true that the planning horizon for young people is more short-term than that of small children, but it is important that they both be conceived of in a synchronized and integrated manner, since in the end they are all the same people. The children of today are the youth of tomorrow.

It is also important to emphasize the fact that the government is not the only one responsible for the development of children and youth. There are important decisions made daily by parents, mothers, caretakers, teachers and all those who deal with children and young people in everyday life. Human development does not always need big laws or policies, but it does require the shared belief that human rights be respected in every little act that people do in their homes, in schools and everywhere else.

Policies for Panamanian Families

How to steer the trajectory of children who are exposed to risks towards a safe route of full development? It would be easy to think that all the responsibility lies with the government, but the evidence reviewed in this Report shows that public actions involving families are also essential. It is crucial to offer positive experiences during early childhood, experiences that rely heavily on positive parenting practices, in a participatory parental style and in order to strengthen the resilience of the family.

Among the protective factors and interventions that promote child development is health,²² such as ensuring maternal breastfeeding (exclusively during the first six

months and then as a supplement until two years of age) and an adequate diet. Dietary supplements during the first two or three years of life improve cognitive ability after 3 years old, and an adequate supply of vitamins, such as iron, has proven effects on motor, socio-emotional and language development.

What to Do? The Power of Positive Parenting Practices

Among positive parenting practices (PPP) that promote cognitive and socio-emotional development are positive monitoring, moral behavior, emotional expressions, dialogue and positive communication, reinforcement and appropriate discipline:

- *Positive monitoring* consists in adequately supervising children, getting to know their friends, activities and places they frequent in a way that does not exert excessive pressure. This monitoring comes from a good communication between parents and children and the demonstration of affection and support in facing challenges.
- *Moral behavior* helps children learn values through parenting practices, in order to show compassion, honesty, generosity and empathy for people. These practices are part of moral behavior and help children learn to put themselves in the place of others and to recognize the impact of their actions.
- *Affective expressions* such as hugs and kisses are part of the proper communication of feelings between parents and children, contributing to the development of emotional abilities such as self-esteem in children and adolescents.
- *Positive dialogue and communication* consists of conversations between parents and children in which the patient exchange of explanations, expressions of feelings and thoughts predominate, all in a climate of trust in which to speak about various topics, including very personal matters. At all stages of development dialogue is important, but during adolescence it is critical because this step requires extra guidance due to the changes and new experiences young people live.

- *Reinforcement* consists in acknowledging the good results or behaviors of the children and in the expression of joy of the parents through praise and positive responses. Reinforcement helps develop self-esteem, while its absence is associated with signs of depression in children.
- *Proper discipline* is very important for socialization and, when based on explanations and discussion of any improper behavior, helps children understand the impact of their actions on themselves and others, and it also leads them to behave properly even without parental supervision. The discipline methods

and the degree of freedom with which they acted. It is not a good idea, therefore, to use methods that are inflexible or too stern in less serious situations or, conversely, to use a relaxed discipline in a serious situation.

The Role of Other Social Spaces

The process of child development depends on the interplay of multiple systems and contexts. Besides the family, other areas are involved in shaping the quality and patterns of behavior, such as school, church, the neighborhood and, in a broader sense, culture as the

Figure 1. Model of Contextual Influence on the Promotion of Infantile Development

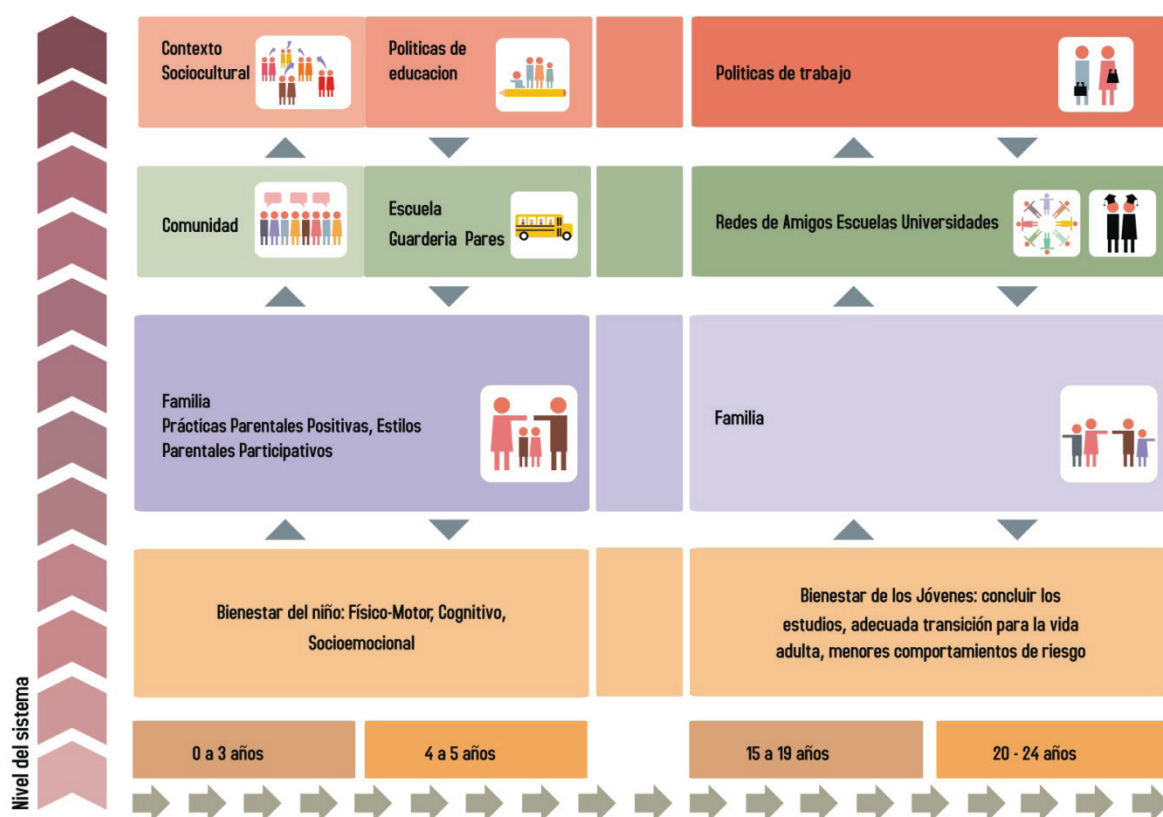


Illustration by Pedro López Ruiz

that produce awareness about the child's actions are those that appeal to the emotions by means of praise or the loss of freedom, and also those that draw attention to the impact of attitudes and errant behaviors on others and on themselves. The methods that consist of taking away objects and privileges are less efficient.

The appropriate method of discipline must consider issues such as: i) the nature of the error and ii) the characteristics of the child, such as gender, the stage of development

set of rules and customs of each society. All this affects parenting styles and practices and its efficiency in education and childcare, and thus influences the results that can be achieved in the future.

For this reason, it is important that policies recognize the direct and indirect effects of various systems, sectors and contexts in different cycles of human development. Emphasis should be given to the interconnected process that promotes child development from the most immediate space, that is, the family, to the most remote areas that have indirect effects (Figure 1). The nearest variables, such as educational parenting practices,

affect child development and have connections to more distant variables, such as the economic policy of a country, as this can aggravate or reduce, for example, the incidence of poverty at home. The family is the place where the first life experiences and socialization occur. As the child grows, however, the interaction extends to other areas and contexts and these grow to have a greater impact on their development, beginning with preschool at the official age of 4 years old. The child's interaction with the community becomes more evident, for example, in their relation to other children (peers) in nursery school or other formal or informal systems of daycare. The support offered by the community helps

families fulfill their role of taking care of their children.

Similarly, the socio-cultural context indirectly influences child development through patterns or values emphasized, through the institutional framework or public policies for child care, such as adequate access to education and health services, prevention, drinking water, housing conditions, and even decent working conditions for the parents, in particular, reducing inequalities in the employment of women.

During adolescence, other spaces apart from the family take on more weight in the development process as, for example, the community becomes very important in providing recreation, schools, universities, libraries,

Table 1. Risk and Protection Factors in Different Spaces and Environments of Infantile Development

Level of System	Risk Factors	Protection Factors
Individual, Biological and Psychological Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premature birth, low birth weight, exposure to toxins in the uterus • Insecure attachment • Low self-esteem • Few relationships with peers • Learning difficulties • Difficult temperament • Physical, cognitive, emotional disability • Chronic diseases • Trauma during childhood • Behavior Problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate health • Secure Attachment • Positive view of self: self-esteem and self-effectiveness • Positive relationships with peers • Good cognitive skills • Sociable and adaptable temperament • Problem-solving skills • Emotional regulation skills • Positive expectations about life (optimism) • Sense of meaning of life
Family	<p><u>Internal factors of the family:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental neglect • Domestic violence • Inconsistent discipline • Negative communication, based on threats, shouting, swearing, excessive criticism • Negative parental practices <p><u>Factors external to the family:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic patterns, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Teenage mothers ► Single mothers ► Absent father ► Separation and divorce • Poverty • Inequality • Restricted access to public services, health and education 	<p><u>Internal factors of the family:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affective interactions • Communication, dialogue • Positive parenting practices • Participatory parental styles • Stable and supportive family environment, with low discord between parents, dedicated caretaker • Suitable relationship with siblings • Support connections with extended family <p><u>Factors external to the family:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socioeconomic benefits • Increased parental education • Family structure that allows stability in functions of care and affection • Equal opportunities • Policies to support family • Policies to support early childhood • Adequate access to public services • Other micro-system social support, such as school
Community Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • High violence • Precarious housing conditions • Lack of health services • Precarious schools • Lack of recreational spaces • Isolation and lack of social support by adult caretakers • Lack of community services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality of the neighborhood or district • Low level of violence in the community • Affordable housing • Access to recreation areas • Access to clean drinking water, clean air, etc. • Effective schools with competent teachers and afterschool programs, resources for recreation such as music, sports and arts • Employment opportunities for parents • Adequate health services • Connections to adult caretakers and pro-social peers
Socio-cultural Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social acceptance of violence • Racism, discrimination • Negative parental habits • Lack of policies and programs for child protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for the protection of children, against child labor and children's healthcare actions • Appreciation of and resources devoted to education • Low acceptance of physical violence

Source: Adapted from Wright and Masten 2006;²⁴ Jenson and Franse 2011;²⁵ Cole et al., 2005.²⁶

access to information and culture. This is where other relationships, such as young friends, are built.

In a broader context, a society's social, political and economic aspects can influence the lives of children and youth. Thus, workplace policies are a priority in bringing adolescents into the labor market and offering them the opportunity to grow and develop professionally. The success of this link, though, also depends on the quality of education/formation and how much young people are allowed or have the opportunity to develop their cognitive and socio-emotional skills. Here, education is important not only for the financial returns in the future, but also for the opportunity it gives to young people to access knowledge and expand their options of a worthwhile lifestyle.

In the general model of intervention it is important to identify both risk factors and protective factors that are present in each context and that may make the child vulnerable, resilient and give them full development and wellbeing.²³ The community is a care support for children but at the same time can be a threat when it is permeated with violence. Each context presents risk factors that threaten children's development and protective factors that can promote it. Table 1 presents a summary of these factors.

Government Policies

Since the Executive Decree 201 in 2009 that adopted a Comprehensive Early Childhood Care Public Policy and adopted the respective *Comprehensive Early Childhood Care Plan* (CECCP), the Panamanian government is now doing many things, especially in the area of maternal-infant health. The Investment Program derived from CECCP prepared by the Advisory Council on Early Childhood and UNICEF in 2011 provides precise actions for preschool education and family support, as well as additional investments in the health sector, deserving of praise and supported. This Report does not attempt to reinvent the wheel but should show agreement with the good initiatives of the government and its partners. Here we add two more inputs, the first being the principles that should guide government intervention from a human development perspective, and the second a model of coordinated and appropriate interventions for Panama.

Principles of Childhood Human Development

- *Respect the autonomy of families and their children.* Going beyond a paradigm of instruction in favor of a paradigm of rights and capabilities.
- *Family Support.* Governments must guarantee support to families not only in terms of resources (for example, maternity and

paternity benefits in line with international agreements that allow a balance between home life and work), but also logistics and incentives for the participation of caretakers in the lives of children.

- *Combat Injustice.* Guarantees of children's basic rights cannot be achieved without elaborating a strategy. Universal coverage of services and programs does not correspond to the reality of many countries, such as Panama, where there are still large social inequalities. Nonetheless, the government should direct resources towards the most disadvantaged and those traditionally excluded as a strategy to combat injustice. Universality must be built starting with the most basic levels of service and moving on to more complex or costly levels only when everyone already enjoys basic services, and this involves respecting an order in which disadvantaged people and families receive more attention from the government.
- *Start Early.* Programs oriented towards early childhood development must start during pregnancy and continue throughout the life cycle of the child. The interventions should be of high quality, early and comprehensive (health, nutrition, education and infant protection), accompanied by communication actions that promote social and behavioral changes that recognize young children as subjects with rights.
- *Maintain a multi-sector approach.* Understanding that human development is multi-dimensional, policies must be comprehensive and multi-sector, such that the various governmental agencies work in a concerted manner with families and communities to offer children the resources they need for their development.

One the other hand, in order to efficiently carry out public policies in this field several elements must be considered:

1. *Protection must be extended to the child, as well as to the caretaker in the home.* The latter part means, for example, programs relating to maternity, breastfeeding or parental involvement in the prenatal period, as well as training in the importance of early childhood and good parenting practices that stimulate the skills of children.
2. *Type of support.* This means that when risk and protection factors are identified the course of interventions will be defined in terms of the efficiency of alternatives. The type of support

may be preventive, control or treatment, and it may also be of a universal or specific type for a particular population.

3. *Macro policies.* Care policies include health, education, justice and other actions. Nonetheless, inter-sector coordination is necessary to avoid wasting resources.
4. *Coordination between programs* that are oriented towards childhood care. Dispersion must be avoided in order to provide the services and to coordinate the orderly participation of actors that influence child development, such as family, school and community.
5. *Multi-sector and inter-agency policies.* The comprehensive nature of human development presupposes the use of multi-sector policies, and child development in particular implies coordinated action by various agencies or state institutions (health, education, culture, justice, etc.), as well as families, communities, cities and other actors that can contribute to this development.
6. *Monitoring and evaluation.* An essential ingredient for all public policy is the permanent analysis of its results and its efficiency compared to other alternatives. Thus, a monitoring system must be provided from the beginning and should be used for the planning and constant improvement of standards.

The evaluation conducted by the World Bank²⁷ showed that, although there are several programs for early childhood development in Panama, most are of a single sector and the country still does not have more

advanced programs of an integrated (multi-sector) and comprehensive nature in terms of its level of evaluation and type of universal support. Similarly, within these policies we still lack inter-institutional programs with a focus on family and community as co-participants and active agents in infant attention.²⁸ The conception of the family as a passive agent, a mere receiver of benefits and services, still persists.

A Model of Coordinated Interventions

1. Home Visitation

According to the principles of human development discussed above, it is important to find a set of methods or a basic mechanism for government action to help empower families to seek their own human development. Judging by the confirmed experience of many countries (Box 4), the most suitable mechanism may be home visitation.

Home visitation is a strategy to identify needs or demands and to provide or deliver the services by means of an inter-disciplinary or inter-agency visit to the home of normally vulnerable families and children in early childhood (defined in Panama as the period from 0 to 5 years old). The aim of visitation is to ensure comprehensive care of the universal rights of the child, and to promote the welfare of the family and the community by identifying and customizing government services, the parents' understanding of risk factors present in their homes and the adoption of measures to reduce them, strengthening the capacities of each member of the family and promoting the quality of interactions between parents and children through the learning of positive parenting skills.²⁹ An important component of visitation is to inform parents and caretakers about the practices and parenting styles

Box 4. Home Visitation: International Evidence

The experiences of countries that have adopted home visitation as a strategy to promote infant development shows positive effects in the short and long term,³⁰ in terms of pregnancy care, children's motor, cognitive and socio-emotional development, in the improvement in the relationship between parents and children and in the home environment. Important impacts include:

- Improved parenting practices and the relationship between parents and children. The Sure Start program implemented in the United Kingdom improved parenting skills of mothers by 86% and increased the responsibility of teenage mothers to meet the needs of their children.
- Reduced behavioral problems of children. Longitudinal follow-up to the Early Head Start program in the United States showed a reduction in crime rates among the children involved.
- Improved quality of the family environment. The program Best Early Years in Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil showed that emotional environment and coexistence improved in 78% and 72% of the families, respectively.
- Reduced frequency of accidents in the home. In the Elmira, New York program, children between 13 and 24 months of age that were benefited from home visitation decreased by 56% the number of emergency room visits.³¹
- Improved care and social support of parents.
- Reduced infant abuse and neglect. In the program of nurse home visitation in Elmira, New York, there was a 79% reduction in the abuse and neglect amongst poor, single mothers.³²
- Adequate cognitive and emotional development. Children who participated in the Early Head Start program showed better academic performance in the long run.

- Increased rate of breastfeeding. In the Early Head Start program this rate increased by 26%.
- Improved health of both mother and child. In the Elmira program the effects were attributed to a better diet for the mothers and babies.
- More efficient use of resources and long-term wellbeing. In the Early Head Start program, a dollar invested in poor children under 5 saved \$7 when they turned 30 years old thanks to lower public health, social security and prison expenses.³³ On the other hand, in the Elmira program, teens who received home care attention as children showed a 55% less likelihood to be arrested by age 15 than those who did not receive this intervention in the early childhood.³⁴

that best stimulate child development in its various dimensions (physical-motor, cognitive and socio-emotional).

Home visitation is an important tool to institutionalize comprehensive family care, as it is the basis for the articulated organization for providing essential public services, such as immunizations, school attendance, civil registration, or adequate information for parents. It is a preventive strategy to identify and mitigate the impact of risk factors within the family, through the recognition and use of family and community resources for long-term infant development.

Home visitation is characterized by:

- The recognition of parents as the primary actors in the care of children.
- A focus on maternal care issues, parenting skills, stimulation and environmental quality.
- Preventive approach, with the early detection and intervention of difficulties both in the family environment and in the child's development.
- The practical side of carrying out contingent interventions related to the family and its environment.
- A multi-dimensional, multi-sector and inter-agency approach.
- It is a multi-mode or multi-component model, which means that home visitation is connected with other types of family care, such as health, access to hospitals, social support and development monitoring.
- Strengthening the relationship between families and communities through formal and informal local networks, and developing network services that adopt a coordinated inter-institutional approach to the planning and delivery of services.³⁵

2. Information and Attention to Families and Early Childhood

Home visitation opens the door to provide additional information through other channels, such as educational pamphlets, radio or television, personal

care centers or telephone consultations. It is important to note that the effectiveness of these media depends on being part of a comprehensive early childhood policy.

Information is crucial because many caretakers are unaware or have difficulty in distinguishing behaviors that are normal in children, and of what they themselves can do for their development. Even when parents do their best, the lack of knowledge of particular periods of child development and of appropriate educational practices can make them feel powerless or incompetent, feel guilty or blame the children, rather than recognizing and using their resources and strengths.

3. Strengthen the Nexus Between Family and School

As noted in the "Do-Dos" and "Don't-Don'ts" analysis (Box 2), preschool is key, but even more so when parents are involved in learning through practices such as reading stories, teaching letters, words and numbers, or drawing or manual work done with the child. This shows that the coordinated action of family and school creates a synergy fundamental for child development. To meet an estimated gap of 52,500 children aged from 4-5 years old without coverage in 2015, an investment is needed in preschool of \$44,625,000³⁶, perhaps the highest budget for any action in the plan for early childhood according to calculations by the Advisory Council and UNICEF.

The challenge of establishing strategies that promote school-family synergy must consider, nonetheless, the two age groups of early childhood, the 0 to 3 and 4 to 5 year olds. In particular, the age 0-3 should be a priority, according to scientific evidence and the results of the Survey carried out for this Report. Although the Survey does not include information about formal or informal access of these young children to early education, it can be shown that the correlation between cognitive development and parenting practices is even greater in ages 1 to 2 year olds than at 3 years of age.

It is worth insisting that the effects of family and school are not interchangeable with each other, which is to say that the school acting without the support of the family does not create conditions sufficient for the child's full development, and vice versa. The family-school relationship is symmetrical (non-hierarchical) and reciprocal. In conclusion, in addition to preschool,

there is a great investment opportunity for children aged 0-3 years within their homes.

For a strategy based on family-school relationship to have a sufficient impact, however, efforts must be intensified to leave behind aspects of persistent traditional paradigms, such as:

- The low recognition and appreciation of the family and, at the other end, an excessive appreciation of school methods that cause conflicts within families and diminish the perceived value of their role in the education of children.
- A hierarchical relationship, instead of a symmetrical and reciprocal one.
- Few bridges of communication between family and school. One-way communication (from school to the family) is predominant, without formal spaces that enable two-way communication, dialogue, reflection and consensual agreements.
- The mobilization of families in relationship to the school is presented as a duty and not as a

right. This can induce passivity in families in their support of children's learning.

In the proposed model of coordinated actions there is a complementary relationship between the different spheres of public action. The important variable is the centrality of the empowerment of families and individuals in their development by means of home visitation, whose focus of action can be expanded with a complementary network of information and a prolongation of relationships between the families and the schools.

4. Monitoring and evaluation of progress in the Route of Integral Attention of Early Childhood

The Advisory Council on Early Childhood developed this "route" as a tool so that families, communities and various institutions of the Panamanian government, acting in a coordinated manner, guarantee the existence of the rights enumerated in Table 2, through the specific actions or "care" summarized there. These attentions must adapt to the needs of children

Table 2. Rights and Care of the Route of Comprehensive Early Childhood Care

Rights	
Right to parenting with adequate steps	Initiation to parenting Early stimulation
Right to health care	Healthcare for pregnant women Healthcare for delivery and post-partum Healthcare of the newborn Healthcare for child Nutrition support
Right to early education	Early formal and non-formal education
Right to identity	Identity card for the pregnant mother Certificate of live birth Registration inscription Issuance of certificate to the minor

Adapted from Inter-American Development Bank and Early Childhood Comprehensive Care Program. "Executive Summary: Route of Comprehensive Early Childhood Care, Preliminary Version." Panama, February 2013.

according to the different stages of life, namely: "1) pregnancy, 2) delivery and postpartum, 3) newborn, 4) 1 month and 1 day to 6 months of life, inclusive, 5) 7 months to 1 year of age, inclusive; 6) 2 years to 3 years of age, inclusive, and 7) 4 to 5 years of life, inclusive."³⁷ The Route is an important step for integral childhood development in Panama. However, in order that the route is not just a plan on paper, the implementation of programs and activities must be accelerated, and coverage must be universal so that, thanks to the irreplaceable efforts of parents, families and, indeed, of all Panamanians, the government does its part to achieve the full development of early childhood. The programs and fieldwork must therefore be maintained

and strengthened, with special attention to the system of home visitation, information about early childhood and the strengthening of constructive links between families and schools.

As its name suggests, the Route is, of course, a road map. This means to continue on the route started, and to do so with more enthusiasm, more public awareness, more national consensus, and more human and financial resources. This might imply some legislative actions, higher, targeted budgets, new institutional arrangements (such as a coordinating agency or institution with sufficient powers and functions to reach the destination, agreements with cities or public-private agreements), mass education campaigns for

parents and caretakers, better protocols for field work and evaluation systems suitable to ensure the route forward. Our children and our children need this.

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The focus of the Panamanian government and its partners on early childhood is the correct one and is in agreement with all the evidence reviewed in this Report, and thus it's not about reinventing the wheel in terms of early childhood policies. Nonetheless, we have seen that a Human Development perspective may help to think of early childhood policies in a more systematic way. First, we must recognize that the situation of early childhood is not just the responsibility of governments but also of families. This is why we speak of "family policies"

in Panama, based on positive parenting practices and the promotion of integral development of both young boys and girls. Second, we have to think about the role of other spaces of socialization of young boys and girls and of how a model of contextual influence must limit risk factors and promote protective factors. Finally, we have seen how government policies, according to a Human Development perspective, should work to build processes based on the principles of respect for the autonomy of families and their children. The proposed model of coordinated interventions, based on the nucleus of home visitation and on the promoting of good interaction between families and schools, can bring many benefits to early childhood policy in Panama.



PART III

YOUTH POLICY

PART III

Youth Policy

The future of young Panamanians is too dependent upon its past. In fact, the education level and parental income substantially influence the life trajectory of peoples' sons and daughters. International experience suggests that it is difficult to build a future free from the weight of inherited inequalities. Official statistics and the results of the Survey conducted for this Report, however, should not lead to surprise, but should instead invite us to think seriously about changing that state of things.

Where to begin? How to design and carry out public policy in which young girls and boys, their families, their communities, the living forces of the country and, of course, the government join efforts to consolidate and build the reality and promise that

Panamanian youth represent? More specifically, how can the education of young people be improved? How can the world of informal labor, where almost half of all young people make their living, be changed? What can be done to allow poor adolescents to make better decisions about their reproductive health? How to change a reality in which young people are blamed for violence when official statistics indicate that they are its biggest victims (Table 3)? How can the quality technical training that Panama needs be better promoted? There is no need to add more questions to this list to realize that there are more challenges for the country's youth than can be dealt with in this Report (Box 5, in which the experts and spokespeople of institutions and youth groups speak out, confirms the long road that remains to be traveled).

Box 5. A Look at Existing Programs and Youth Associations in Panama

In preparation of this Report, 19 governmental and 27 non-governmental organizations were consulted by means of interviews on the current state of youth policies, the services that are provided to young people and the youth organizations in Panama.

Two points that were important to many people interviewed were the lack of spaces for youth participation and the large number of youth associations and organizations as well as government programs that have been disappearing, are now inactive, abandoned, in crisis or have changed their goals or priorities. The lack of youth participation or agency was a common concern to many of those interviewed.

It was also apparent the dispersal of efforts, programs or activities, the lack of coordination among government agencies and between them and NGOs, the notorious duplication of functions, the low coverage of many initiatives, the tightness of economic resources and various other factors that limit the scope and effectiveness of the work of and for adolescents and youth.

In some communities, especially urban ones, there are unresolved tensions and there are processes of social disorganization which in large part explain why some young people end up taking part in criminal activities or choosing risky behaviors that bring about results such as unwanted pregnancies, domestic violence, gangs, single mothers or a rupture from the school system (drop-outs) and consequently wind up in the informal economy or are unemployed.

Experts agreed in pointing out the importance of a comprehensive approach to avoid the most serious expressions of those pathologies, such as homicidal violence, HIV/AIDS or the consumption of highly destructive drugs.

People interviewed spoke of a long list of challenges and obstacles their organizations face, primarily in the areas of sex education, gangs, homelessness and, *lato sensu*, youth policies. The list includes issues such as budget cuts, lack of proper equipment, lack of qualified personnel, lack of monitoring, paperwork, breach of agreements and responsibilities assigned by governing bodies, an excess of negative stereotypes of youth in the media and the persistence of myths, taboos and stigmas regarding issues that affect youth.

Due to all the above, this Report seeks to help Panamanian society to become more aware of the situation of its youth and to make a decision to strengthen and take advantage of its enormous potential. For this reason, the Report does not present a single path for all young people, but rather a set of desired trajectories that are diverse and built not "for" young people but "by" and "with" them.

The first step is to address the obvious, that is, that Panama needs to launch a national youth strategy. The second step is to ensure that what are today merely scattered aspects of those official policies or programs that can be called "macro youth policies" (that is, public policies which, although not directly aimed at young people, in practice affect an important dimension of their lives), are seen as integral parts of a coherent, explicit and systematic public policy, conceived of as a government project or one with long-term vision, in which young people are no longer objects of an uneven treatment. The basis of this new policy should be clear and simple, namely, that we must believe and trust in our youth, we must bet on them and with them, we must leave behind negative and fearful views, the stereotypes that want to see them as problems when in fact they are the solution that Panama needs. To help or to modestly add to this change of view is the meaning and purpose of the suggestions offered by this Report.

Principles of Human Development for Youth

The main public policy recommendation is to launch a national youth strategy. Within the paradigm of Human Development this means reviving, expanding and sustaining a dialogue with the various groups and organizations that represent youth, understanding this strategy as plural, diverse and with multiple perspectives of the freedom of personal development and of belonging to Panamanian society. This dialogue and the very development of strategies, programs and activities resulting from it, must stick to a set of six core principles derived from the paradigm of Human Development:

1. *Respect the freedom and autonomy of young people.* Panamanian youth need a set of public policy responses and interventions that respect young people as autonomous subjects, with their own ideas, preferences and opinions, and in whose hands the decisions about their own lives must lie. Paternalistic policies that merely lecture youth, however well intentioned, can erode that which we want to build, namely, youth autonomy, a sense of responsibility and organizational skills.
2. *Promotion of youth goals and aspirations.* It is common to speak of the goals of young people in the context of their education or professional career, but goals can also relate to every aspect of a person's life. For this reason, it should be emphasized that appreciating and promoting the aspirations of young people is a way to promote and assert their autonomy in choosing the life goals they themselves create. The goals of young people must be understood in the context of their culture, their family life, their history and habits. From the perspective of Human Development, to encourage the goals of youth for a better life means betting on innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.
3. *Inclusive processes.* Panamanian youth is very diverse and thus it seems ill advised or unfeasible to seek uniform solutions. There are different problems and different opportunities that need to be resolved or taken advantage of with and for different groups of young people. The problems of dropping out of school and early pregnancy affect primarily youth between 15 and 19 years of age, particularly young women in rural areas, whereas work in the informal sector and job insecurity affect more young people aged between 20 and 24 years old. For this reason, inclusive processes must respect diversity and should facilitate dialogue amongst young people about different ways to live in Panama.
4. *Creation of spaces for youth participation.* The intensity of repressive and exclusionary discourse of young people has tended to increase with the passage of time. This is evidenced, for example, in the withdrawal of the authorization to form political student groups, both in government and private schools; the increasing limits and constraints for celebrating festivals and extracurricular activities; or the censorship of emerging artistic and cultural expressions of young people, such as new dance and musical styles and arts or sports organizations that formally or informally are censored by national or local authorities and by a sector of opinion leaders.

Far from these repressive attitudes, Panamanian society must commit to actively promoting youth organization in both the education system and in the community, as well as to recognize human rights of minors as a prerequisite for the transition to adulthood in a society with democratic values.

5. *Fostering a culture of professional and economic choice for young people.* Panama's economic

culture restricts the professional, technical and occupational choices for young people, separating, for example, the system of formal education and vocational training, or creating a situation in which the decisions made by young people or imposed upon them at an early age in life determines the economic future of our youth.

Information society benefits all kinds of talents and vocations not only those required by the market in the short term but also those in cultural industries, professional sports, technological innovation, the arts and business development. Facilitating cultural change involves a process of dialogue with young people that enables them to participate in the design of curricular options, business training, artistic activities, sports and similar activities and which, in turn, provide them with appropriate qualifications and certifications for the next level of academic education. This recommendation will require of the Panamanian government a thorough review of its curricular plans in regards to training policies and the certification of talent.

6. *Normalization of the image of youth.* The social media have promoted an image of youth as a problem, which includes aspects such as a threat to security, sexual promiscuity, the consumption of alcohol and drugs, school dropouts and gangs, and presents youth as a whole as the carrier and agent of all forms of social deviance. While the presence of all these phenomena cannot be denied, the stereotypes of youth being promoted are also undeniable. To achieve the appropriate climate and environment for dialogue and consensus building about youth, it is important to make an effort to respect the human rights of young people.

The aforementioned principles are general in nature and should permeate the conception, implementation and monitoring of public policy and macro youth policies. In essence, the idea is that young people not be seen as problems or as passive agents of social services. These principles reflect in varying degrees the Human Development paradigm and promote the freedoms of young Panamanians, within a context in which many youth organizations, such as the Foundation for Youth Development (Fundejoven), National Institute for Rural Youth (Panajuru), Center for Youth Research (ICJ), Indigenous Association of Panama (Asipa) and Foundation for the Prevention of Drug Use (Pride), among other movements and groups, have ceased to exist and where young people do not have much influence or voice in the formulation or implementation of public policy.

Towards a Model of Coordinated Interventions: Specific Policies

The coordination and integration of policies have become very common expressions but are rarely used in practice. In a way, these are not very novel proposals for Human Development, which always worked within a multidimensional approach requiring coordination and comprehensiveness in terms of approaches and interventions. For us, the difference is that the coordination does not occur in a mechanical way, as some models more oriented towards economic growth seem to suggest. A genuine human development strategy involves, rather, a process of *public reasoning*, of scrutiny, research, balance of evidence, exposure of value judgments and debates so that the coordination and integration of action reflects reasoned priorities and not some prefabricated, canned, processed, and ready-to-use algorithm.

Within the model of coordinated interventions recommended in this Report in relation to youth, we can highlight some more specific lines of action:

1. *Expansion and improvement of national youth statistics.* The absence of reliable, representative and continually updated data on issues that concern young people makes it difficult to formulate hypotheses that can be subjected to verification, and also makes public debate about youth issues, almost always utilized in journalistic reports, difficult. We would like to ask the Ministry of Social Development, as well as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Security and the Comptroller General of the Republic (the main bodies responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating statistical information on issues affecting young people) to redouble their efforts in this area. An effort to improve the statistical system would change the public image of young people, more influenced today by stereotypes than by objective data.
2. *Education that deepens the connections between cognitive and socio-emotional knowledge.* The Survey of this Report proved the existence of a strong synergy between the cognitive and socio-emotional skills of young people in Panama. It follows that investment in improving emotional skills of youth should be seen, as well, as a strategy to improve their cognitive skills. In addition, by means of communication with the productive world, schools must understand that modern businesses need workers with the basic skills of knowing how to listen, how to express themselves verbally, how to read, write and calculate, and with reasoning skills (the ability to learn, reason,

anticipate, imagine and decide) and personal values (self-esteem, ability to work in a team, responsibility, honesty, self-control and sociability).

The school can also follow the methods used by personnel departments of modern businesses to discover aspects of personality tied to values and principles. By means of specific cases that require decision-making, the values of a person can be discovered. None of these criteria is part of an institutional and documented evaluation of habits at school. Within the group of values evaluated by the school, those related to entrepreneurship, creativity, teamwork, innovation and resilience are not included, and these habits instead of being promoted are often discouraged within the school. The individual is evaluated, failure is punished, and students who are different are usually pushed out of the group, at times punished or rejected for not following the uniform line set by the teacher under an authoritarian system that leaves little opportunity to choose between different options.

3. *Support for young people*, mainly in rural areas, who abandon their studies. A considerable number of young people, mainly in rural and indigenous areas, apparently become “Ni – Nis” due to early pregnancy or early family constitution. The vast majority of young people in this situation has not completed primary school and lives in indigenous areas. A social protection policy that minimizes the impact of motherhood during adolescence should be a key part for the inclusion of a quarter of the young Panamanians in the education system or the labor market. For those young people who must work involuntarily but would like to study, government support in the form of scholarships to help them stay within the educational system is important. From a Human Development approach, not only the “workings” or results per se but also the “capabilities” and freedoms are important, such that people not be condemned to a life without education and without work solely because of the fact that they are young women or men.
4. *A pattern of pro-youth economic growth*. Detailed “input-output” studies are needed to determine the volume and nature of the demand for workers that are absorbed by the various sectors of economic activity today, as well as prospective studies in education, technology and labor, in addition to follow-up work of independent observers so that they can produce robust statistics. These investigations should address the current and future

potential of the sectors that bring about economic growth, projected employment by industry and occupational categories, the employed population by economic activity, income level of this population, the multiplier effect of employment, the matrix of inter-sector transactions, an analysis of results and the resultant training needs. Based on these updated diagnoses, strategies and tools of many types (education, training, employment, taxation, international trade, technical assistance, pricing, intellectual property, etc.) can and should be recalibrated so that the pattern of growth can offer more and better opportunities for youth.

5. *Strengthen the labor monitoring system*. Compared to the rest of Latin America, the informal sector in Panama is relatively small. This distinct advantage, however, does not prevent the fact that many workers, especially young people, in formal companies do not receive minimum wage, legal benefits or the protection of social security. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the labor monitoring system, starting with the National Labor Inspectorate within the Ministry of Labor. More inspectors, better information systems and more agile responses from judges are needed to prevent violations and evasions of labor and social security legislation by licensed companies. Article 128 of the Labor Code establishes that employers have a duty to “allow and facilitate the inspection and supervision of the Administrative and Judicial Labor Authorities, to be carried out in the company, establishment or business.” By means of Act No. 14 of 1967, Panama ratified Convention 81 of the International Labor Organization, whose Article 12 gives inspectors the power to enter the property “without notice and at any time of the day or night” and to examine any facility, document or witness as necessary. In addition, Article 139 of the Code allows the imposing of fines to companies that hinder inspection, while Articles 1041, 1059 and 1060 regulate complaints before the labor courts, the penalties of fines or imprisonment, and any action necessary to collect civil damages.
6. *A national system of training and accreditation for work*. Unlike many other countries in the region and the world, the demand for skilled workers in Panama is higher than the supply of available personnel. This gives us the unique opportunity to use professional training as a beginning of, according to the G20 Training Strategy, “a virtuous circle in which greater and better education and training feed innovation, investment, economic

diversification and competitiveness, in addition to social and occupational mobility, and thus the creation of more jobs which in turn are more productive and more fulfilling.”³⁸ It is time to think about a national accreditation system for training and job skills, such as those that exist and function successfully today in countries like Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Singapore.³⁹ These systems, of course, benefit and work with mostly young people, and they also, of course, relate to both cognitive and socio-emotional skills. This is not about creating new institutions but rather an integrative and regulatory mechanism of the existing multiple and disparate offers, where various actors, both public or private, attend training programs and coordinated procedures that focus on relevance, content, level and quality, to thus achieve better effects on employability, performance, occupational reconversion or mobility of workers. Competencies can be acquired within the formal, technical or “non-formal” education systems, and in the businesses. The formative institutions and employees are certified by a tripartite (government, businessmen and workers) national accreditation and certification board provided with the necessary support for the ongoing study of occupational profiles and technological changes to allow the supply of labor skills to be adapted to existing or projected demand. The following two recommendations could reform and complement this national training system and labor accreditation.

7. *Increase investment and budget for vocational and technical training.* A specific goal could be to fund the training of 10% of the economically active population, including both job training and entrepreneurship training, as well as ongoing training to increase social mobility. The investment required would amount to approximately 10% of the amount earmarked for formal education. Promoting and strengthening professional and technical training institutes is not only important to meet the currently unmet demand but also to provide Panamanian workers with the knowledge and skills that the economy and society of tomorrow will require.
8. *Accreditation of professional training courses.* Evaluate the performance and quality of learning in professional and technical training institutes is essential for the accreditation of institutions and programs. These tasks should be carried out by an autonomous Board of Assessment and Accreditation and with the participation of representatives of the productive sector, both

employees and employers. Accreditation is a key bridge between the sub-system of regular and non-formal or non-regular education, recognizing credits that allow a flow of students in both directions. It is important, therefore, to develop standardization and certification projects of labor competencies in different fields of vocational and technical training. In Panama, there is already a group of specialists prepared by the Labor Foundation that has carried out certification in areas such as construction and tourism, with the participation of both employers’ associations and trade unions of these sectors. This work should be extended to other areas.

9. *A comprehensive strategy for the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency.* The Human Development Report on Citizen Security in Central America noted that safety is a right that all governments must guarantee.⁴⁰ International experience shows clearly that in order to substantially and effectively reduce crime rates, the tasks of prevention, control, punishment and rehabilitation of offenses and offenders must be dealt with in a comprehensive, proportional and professional way. These tasks relate to both government security and justice systems (police, judiciary, prison subsystem) as well as institutions of social development and local governments within the public sector, in addition to the essential role played by citizens individually and collectively (local community, educational institutions, media, religious groups, NGOs and other groups involved in public safety).

From this comprehensive Human Development approach, punishing crimes is a custodial role of the government and should be meted out equally on those adults or youth who have reached the legal age. Provided that the presumption of innocence, due process, equality before the law, the proportionality of penalties and other guarantees enshrined in the Constitution (especially Articles 18 to 35) are respected, the police, judicial and prison authorities are constituted to ensure that criminal laws are enforced. The Constitution itself, however, provides that “juvenile detainees are subject to a special regime of custody, protection and education” (Article 28). The rehabilitation of these minors, who normally present complex pathologies, requires competent professional treatment, which tends to be expensive. Therefore, a public policy on citizen security must pay more attention to the Custody and Treatment Centers and must strengthen the capacity and programs of the National Secretariat for Children, Teenagers and Family (SENNIAF) in this field.

Criminals, however, are a minority and this hold true, obviously, among the young people of Panama. In fact, young men and women are citizens who have the right and the need for government and society to guarantee them protection from crime and violence on an equal footing with any other segment of the population. Panama shares the same interests as its young people. What's more, young men and women suffer violence that ends in homicide, personal injury that leads to hospitalization, rape and other sexual offenses, bullying, domestic violence and child abuse, in a greater proportion. We also have seen how many young people are psychological victims of crime and how this reduces their freedoms of movement and recreation. As a result of all of this, security is central to youth policy. To deal with this problem, the components that particularly affect young people, such as the fight against organized crime (the apparent cause of a large number of homicides), gun control (the instrument of a large part of crimes) or low-level drug trafficking and widespread drug use, as well as the unfulfilled or emerging tasks in the field of violence against women (criminalization, specialized personnel, care for victims, etc) and school violence and child abuse, must be emphasized.

We know, however, that prevention is worth more than a cure, and is cheaper, as well. Thus, a policy of citizen security must everywhere focus primarily on preventing crime. If it's true, as is often said, that young people have a special propensity to crime, the logical consequence would be that Panama needs an ambitious prevention strategy targeted at youth. This strategy starts with the family and the school, where children and young people learn coexistence, civility, respect for others, the peaceful solution of problems and respect for the law; is part of the "learning from example" that applies to opinion leaders and role models whose behavior has to be spotless and subject to strict control of justice; includes public-private networks to protect at-risk children from engaging in criminal conduct, by means of receiving centers, foster care, psychiatric attention, academic tutoring, job training and other similar means; and extends to rehabilitation and social reintegration of young ex-convicts or severe addicts that, as we've said, need skilled care and a greater investment by the Panama government. Gun control deserves a special chapter, as there is much to be done in regards to international trafficking, storage, gun licenses, registration systems, decommissions, fines, disarmament campaigns and more. The hours and restrictions on sales and the effective monitoring of laws on alcohol are another basic front of action. Last but not least, there is in Latin America and the world a wide range of experience in the recovery and use of public spaces, urban renewal, and even massive, multi-sector interventions by security, justice, social development, community-based and civil society agencies designed

to lower violence and crime in neighborhoods or areas where these have reached alarming levels.

The 2006 Executive Decree 260 adopted the principles of the Government Crime Policy proposed by the Government's Executive Branch Commission for Justice. The principles of prevention, public safety, human rights, social justice, sustainable Human Development, citizen participation and education for a culture of peace must, therefore, frame public security policies. Beginning in that year and within these parameters, the Comprehensive Security Program (PROSI), in effect in the provinces of Panama, Colon, San Miguelito and Chiriqui, integrates the efforts of the community and various public organizations in crime and violence prevention activities. The Commission adopted a series of "policy guidelines" whose legal adoption and systematic implementation will surely increase the safety of Panamanians of all ages. The "guidelines" in effect relate to prevention in schools; drug and alcohol consumption; youth gangs; concentrated areas of violence and crime; the campaign, local alliance and capacity of institutional attention focused on *gender violence; control and punishment of crime*, by improving police effectiveness, police-community programs, detection and intervention in drug trafficking, the criminal justice processing system, infrastructure and prison population, training in the prison system; and social reintegration and rehabilitation, improving coverage and quality of programs in that area.

10. *A plan by and for young people.* As the actors they are, and should be, of their own development, and as the citizens they are and will be of Panama, young men and women can no longer be passive subjects but rather must be protagonists of public policy. Thus, youth policy must be conceived and executed from the paradigms of human development and citizenship, where the people themselves are part and parcel of the conceptualization and implementation of all programs.

So that the youth plan be made with young people, we need to build on what has already been built, rescue the progress already made, and rebuild the Public Policy Youth Council (CPPJ), an organization for consultation, information, advice and a liaison between government institutions, youth organizations and private entities with attributes or programs involving youth. This Council consists of up of ten representatives of government institutions, two from civil society and 14 members from the National Youth Council.

The National Youth Council (CONAJUPA) must also be reactivated as an organ of youth representation to be consulted by the governing bodies of the

respective policy, with the additional task of aiding and contributing to the preparation of the assessment and consultation process with Panamanian youth to serve as a support for public policies and the formulation and implementation of a new National Youth Plan. In this line of ideas, and in a permanent way, the National Youth Council must accompany the collection, systematization and dissemination process of the aforementioned national youth statistics.

No less important is to build and learn from these processes, such as the 15 forums which a few years ago served to outline a comprehensive public youth policy, when youths from rural, urban, indigenous areas, volunteers, the disabled, prisoners, the excluded, as well as youth organizations, government institutions and civil society, were consulted. Or, for example, from the "Youth Agenda," when the National Youth Council, assisted by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Center for Social Development Studies (CEDES) and the Electoral Tribunal, presented to the presidential candidates in the 2009 elections the interests and priorities of the Panamanian youth. Many of these proposals are still valid and are therefore worth reviewing, updating and incorporating with a strong political will to implement them. We would thus be on track to realize the ideal of a comprehensive public policy made by young people, with young people and for the young people of Panama.

* * *

The long-term investments that Panama has made for early childhood should be seen as a sign of a promising future. Unfortunately, the same preparation and coordination does not exist in the formulation and implementation of youth policies. In fact, a national youth policy in Panama based on early childhood policy is lacking. Nonetheless, with an improved budget and a framework of coordinated interventions for youth, it is possible to coordinate efforts within the most sensitive areas of Panamanian youth. The principles of human development introduced here can help in building a dialogue for developing a national policy "for" and "with" young people. The specific policy recommendations illustrate existing deficits of youth in Panama and offer a model of coordinated interventions that demand the participation of young people in defining priorities in the formulation and implementation of these policies.

Box 6. Main Messages of the National Human Development Report, Panama 2014

The main message of this Report is very simple: the future of Panama is now being built with an integrated formation strategy for its children and youth. To make that future a reality, the Report shows that:

- It is essential to recognize that there are specific gaps in the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children and youth in Panama that can be combated with specific policies, some of which are not very complexity.
- Investment in infrastructure is important for the development of babies.
- Much of the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children and youth depends on parenting practices which need to be supported by public policy.
- Inside homes, families must invest more in activities shared with their children and in the introduction of rules and routines, as these promote child development.
- Investment is needed not only in the formal education of children and youth, but also in their integral education and development, including cognitive and socio-emotional aspects, as this combination allows them to become good citizens and good workers, with the freedoms and choices necessary for a good life.
- The future of youth in Panama is still very much determined by the past, specifically by the income and education of the family to which they belong. It is necessary to strengthen their technical training by means of improved accreditation and better financing in technical institutes.
- There should be a Panama national youth policy, in the broadest sense, in the format that currently exists for early childhood. Is important to propose this national policy for the training, work, sexual health and safety of young people.
- For best results, early childhood and youth services should not be isolated but rather should come in an integrated form. A model of coordinated interventions for children based on home visitation and the strengthening of the family-school relationship is recommended.



ANNEX

Index of Human Development in Panama

When the scores obtained with the Index of Human Development in Panama, at the level of provinces and counties, are correlated, there is a high level of linkage between human development and cognitive and socio-emotional scores (0.90 out of 1). The dimensions of standard of living and education have a similar association with both scores, but the health dimension has a much higher relation to

the cognitive score, which is linked to the effects of early development on people, regions with greater longevity that have lower infant mortality, better nutrition and health conditions, which constitutes a context that enhances the development of people (see Annex IHDP. For more information on methodology see NHRI Panama 2007-2008. Human Development Institutionalization. Annex 1).

INDEX OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN PANAMA												
Province	Literacy Rate 2010	Literacy Rate 2012	Literacy Rate 2013	Combined Assistance 2010	Combined Assistance 2012	Combined Assistance 2013	Average Years of School 2010	Average Years of School 2012	Average Years of School 2013	School Achievement 2010	School Achievement 2012	School Achievement 2013
Bocas del Toro	87.5	89.1	90.0	71.2	70.3	73.4	7.4	8.0	8.0	0.699	0.716	0.728
Coclé	95.3	95.4	96.0	72.0	70.8	76.5	8.4	8.6	8.7	0.751	0.751	0.775
Colón	97.4	97.7	97.9	72.2	74.7	73.4	9.9	10.2	10.1	0.793	0.810	0.803
Chiriquí	94.1	95.0	93.6	73.9	79.0	80.4	9.0	9.5	9.4	0.766	0.797	0.797
Darién	83.9	85.8	86.6	68.6	71.3	71.5	6.2	6.5	6.7	0.651	0.673	0.680
Herrera	93.2	94.2	93.7	76.8	76.8	80.1	8.7	9.0	9.1	0.767	0.776	0.788
Los Santos	93.2	93.4	93.4	74.9	80.4	82.9	8.4	8.8	8.8	0.754	0.782	0.790
Panamá	97.7	98.2	98.5	72.4	75.1	75.4	10.6	11.0	11.1	0.812	0.830	0.834
Veraguas	89.1	88.3	88.3	76.4	78.9	77.3	8.1	8.0	8.1	0.738	0.741	0.738
Guna Yala	71.5	72.3	77.4	68.1	67.7	73.8	4.8	5.1	5.1	0.576	0.583	0.621
Emberá Wounaan	76.9	77.1	83.0	71.8	76.8	76.2	4.9	4.9	6.0	0.608	0.626	0.669
Ngäbe Buglé	69.1	72.4	70.3	71.5	73.3	75.0	4.0	4.5	4.4	0.561	0.589	0.585
País	94.4	94.8	94.9	72.8	75.2	76.1	9.5	9.8	9.9	0.775	0.792	0.797
Urbano	97.8	98.2	98.3	74.4	77.0	77.5	10.8	11.1	11.2	0.822	0.839	0.842
Rural	87.5	88.2	87.7	70.2	72.3	73.8	6.8	7.0	7.0	0.682	0.697	0.700

Province	Life Expectancy at Birth 2010	Life Expectancy at Birth 2012	Life Expectancy at Birth 2013	Life Expectancy Achieved 2010	Life Expectancy Achieved 2012	Life Expectancy Achieved 2013
Bocas del Toro	71.9	72.5	72.7	0.781	0.791	0.796
Coclé	76.0	76.5	76.7	0.851	0.858	0.861
Colón	74.0	74.5	74.7	0.816	0.825	0.829
Chiriquí	77.4	77.9	78.0	0.874	0.882	0.884
Darién	72.7	73.3	73.6	0.795	0.805	0.811
Herrera	77.5	77.9	78.1	0.875	0.881	0.885
Los Santos	77.8	78.2	78.3	0.879	0.887	0.889
Panamá	78.6	79.0	79.2	0.894	0.901	0.903
Veraguas	76.0	76.5	76.7	0.850	0.858	0.861
Guna Yala	70.1	70.8	71.1	0.752	0.763	0.768
Emberá Wounaan	68.8	69.4	69.8	0.729	0.741	0.746
Ngäbe Buglé	68.5	69.3	69.7	0.725	0.739	0.744
País	76.7	77.2	77.4	0.862	0.869	0.873
Urbano	78.7	79.1	79.3	0.895	0.902	0.906
Rural	75.0	75.4	75.6	0.833	0.840	0.843

Province	Housing Achieved 2010	Housing Achieved 2012	Housing Achieved 2013	Average Monthly Income p/p 2010	Average Monthly Income p/p 2012	Average Monthly Income p/p 2013	Income Achieved 2010	Income Achieved 2012	Income Achieved 2013	Employment Achieved 2010	Income Achieved 2012	Income Achieved 2013	Quality of Life Achieved 2010	Quality of Life Achieved 2012	Quality of Life Achieved 2013
Bocas del Toro	38.7	43.6	44.4	125	138	160	0.494	0.512	0.539	53.2	42.2	45.3	0.471	0.457	0.479
Coclé	54.4	56.6	57.7	157	170	198	0.535	0.550	0.578	49.9	41.3	45.7	0.526	0.510	0.538
Colón	66.8	69.5	70.9	211	236	264	0.589	0.610	0.630	68.8	70.4	75.1	0.649	0.670	0.697
Chiriquí	63.3	65.8	67.1	195	208	257	0.576	0.587	0.626	56.0	50.2	58.1	0.590	0.582	0.626
Darién	29.9	31.1	31.8	113	129	169	0.475	0.500	0.549	37.0	31.6	41.1	0.382	0.376	0.426
Herrera	71.2	74.1	75.6	214	220	270	0.592	0.597	0.635	54.2	50.9	54.7	0.615	0.616	0.646
Los Santos	77.8	81.0	82.6	210	249	267	0.589	0.620	0.632	49.3	48.5	54.5	0.620	0.638	0.668
Panamá	68.6	71.3	72.7	367	369	388	0.691	0.692	0.701	78.7	80.7	81.4	0.721	0.737	0.747
Veraguas	51.7	53.7	54.8	154	163	197	0.532	0.542	0.577	43.9	40.4	42.1	0.496	0.494	0.515
Guna Yala	1.0	1.0	1.0	58	59	73	0.356	0.356	0.397	18.5	11.6	13.1	0.183	0.161	0.179
Emberá Wounaan	4.1	4.3	4.4	53	87	146	0.336	0.427	0.523	17.9	11.8	30.2	0.186	0.196	0.290
Ngäbe Buglé	0.7	0.8	0.8	23	45	84	0.182	0.307	0.422	12.8	4.7	7.7	0.106	0.121	0.169
País	60.4	62.8	64.1	265	274	303	0.631	0.637	0.655	67.2	63.8	67.3	0.636	0.634	0.656
Urbano	70.3	73.2	74.6	349	350	371	0.681	0.682	0.693	77.5	78.9	80.0	0.720	0.734	0.746
Rural	41.9	43.6	44.4	108	133	169	0.468	0.506	0.549	39.2	32.3	37.3	0.426	0.422	0.455

Province	IHDP 2010	IHDP 2012	IHDP 2013	% Growth 2010-2013
Bocas del Toro	0.652	0.655	0.668	2.4
Coclé	0.706	0.706	0.725	2.6
Colón	0.749	0.768	0.776	3.6
Chiriquí	0.739	0.754	0.769	4.1
Darién	0.598	0.618	0.639	6.9
Herrera	0.750	0.758	0.773	3.1
Los Santos	0.748	0.769	0.782	4.6
Panamá	0.802	0.823	0.828	3.2
Veraguas	0.684	0.698	0.705	3.0
Guna Yala	0.511	0.502	0.523	2.4
Emberá Wounaan	0.497	0.521	0.568	14.3
Ngäbe Buglé	0.465	0.483	0.499	7.5
País	0.753	0.765	0.775	3.0
Urbano	0.805	0.825	0.831	3.3
Rural	0.638	0.653	0.666	4.5



Notes

¹ These stories are records from the Survey made for this Report.

² Data from the Comptroller General of the Republic by the National Census done in 2010.

³ ICEF (2005). "Infant Development Index," New York, UNICEF.

⁴ McGrath, 2003, Heckman, Stixrud and Urzua, 2006, Cunha and Heckman, 2007.

⁵ See Manpower, 2012, as a good example.

⁶ See Heckman and Rubinstein, 2001, Carneiro and Heckman, 2003.

⁷ This evidence is examined in Chapter 1 of the Report.

⁸ This effect is not statistically significant when parenting practice variables are introduced.

⁹ When controlling for parenting practices, the impact drops to 36% but is still highly significant.

¹⁰ In a recent consultation of Meduca as preliminary data, it indicated that for 2012 this figure was only 29.7%.

¹¹ See Kendall, 2010.

¹² Consult Sommers, 2010 and Ismael and Alao, 2007.

¹³ According to the official data from the INEC, primary school repetition rate in 2011 was 5.6% but this reaches 14.9% in Ngäbe and 17.3% in Embera. www.contraloria.gob.pa.

¹⁴ The source for CEPAL (educational environment) is Social Panorama of Latin America 2012.

¹⁵ Brigas, M., Paquette, D. Estudo pessoa-processo-contexto da qualidades das interações entre mãe-adolescente e seu bebê. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, v. 12, n. 5, pages 1167-1174, 2007.

¹⁶ Figueiredo, Bárbara. Maternidade na adolescência: Consequências e trajetórias desenvolvimentais. *Análise Psicológica*, v. 4, n. XVIII, p. 485-498, 2000.

¹⁷ Ministry of Security. 2012: 12.

¹⁸ Ministry of Security. Press Conference, Statistical

Year Presentation 2012. Statistics from SIEC. January 10, 2013. Page 17.

¹⁹ Ministry of Public Security. 1991-2010: 39.

²⁰ National Integrated System of Criminal Statistics. 2011: 79.

²¹ UNICEF, The Indigenous Girl and The Urban Teenage Boy: Between Risks and Opportunities. An agenda for action. Panama 2011.

²² Heckman, J. Role of Income and Family Influence on Child Outcomes. *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*. 1136: 307-323. 2008.

²³ Garbarino, J., Abramowitz, R. Sociocultural Risk and Opportunity. In: Garbarino, J. Children and families in the social environment. 2. ed. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1992b.

²⁴ Wright, Margaret and Masten, Ann. Resilience Processes in Development. In: Goldstein, S.; Brooks, R. Handbook of Resilience in Children. Springer Science, Business Media, LLC, 2006.

²⁵ Jenson, Jeffrey and Fraser, Mark. A Risk and Resilience Framework for Child, Youth, and Family Policy. In Jenson, Jeffrey and Fraser, Mark. Social policy for Children and Families: A Risk and Resilience Perspective. 2 ed. London: SAGE, 2011.

²⁶ Cole, M.; Cole, S., Lightfoot, C. The Development of Children. 5. ed. New York: Worth Publishers, 2005.

²⁷ World Bank. Strengthening Public Policies and Programs of Early Childhood Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. 2010.

²⁸ See Freire, Carolina. Public Policy Analysis of Early Childhood in Panama. Product 2: IV NHRI Panama. Draft Version (2).

²⁹ Ministry of Health, Chile Grows with You (2008). Technical Guidelines for Integral Home Visitation for Bio-psychosocial Child Development. Comprehensive Protection System for Early Childhood, Undersecretary of Public Health Division of Disease Prevention and Control Department of Mental Health.

³⁰ Ministry of Health, Chile Grows with You (2008) op.cit.

³¹ Olds, D.; Henderson, C., Chamberlin, R., and Tatelbaum, R. 1986. Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect: A Randomized Trial of Nurse Home Visitation. *Pediatrics* 78 (1): 65-78.

³² Olds, D., Eckenrode, J., Henderson, C.R., Jr., Kitzman, H., Powers, J., Cole, R., Sidora, K., Morris, P., Pettitt, L., and Luckey, D. 1997. Long-term Effects of Home Visitation on Maternal Life Course and Child Abuse and Neglect: 15-year Follow-up of a Randomized Trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278 (8): 637-643.

³³ Prowse, Martin. The Experience of Sure Start in England. Draft Report prepared for EPIC.

³⁴ Olds, D., Henderson, C., Phelps, C., Kitzman, H., and Hanks, C. 1993. Effect of Prenatal and Infancy Nurse Home Visitation on Government Spending. *Medical Care* 31 (2): 155-174.

³⁵ Katz, I. and Valentine, K. (2009), Lessons for Australia from the UK Sure Start Programme, SPRC Report 2/09, Report prepared for Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Submitted July 2006, Published April 2009.

³⁶ See Table 2.2 in the Early Childhood Investment Program in Panama, UNICEF, 2011.

³⁷ Inter-American Development Bank and the Advisory Council of Early Childhood. Executive Summary: Integral Care Route for Early Childhood, Draft. Panama: February 2013.

³⁸ G20 and ILO (2010). A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: G-20 Training Strategy, Geneva, ILO, page 14. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_175691.pdf.

³⁹ A good comparative analysis of training systems and labor accreditation is that of Phillip Toner (2011). *Workforce Skills and Innovation: an Overview of Major Themes in the Literature*, Paris, OECD. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/sti/inno/46970941.pdf>.

⁴⁰ UNDP (2010). Opening Spaces for Citizen Security and Human Development, Human Development Report for Central America, 2009-2010, page 214. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/es/informes/regional/americalatinacaribe/Central_America_RHDR_2009-10_ES.pdf.





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