



Spotlight Initiative

ANNUAL NARRATIVE PROGRAMME REPORT

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FIRST REPORT SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE ECUADOR

The report covers progress made since the approval of the Spotlight Initiative program in Ecuador on November 9th, 2020, and informs on the project launching, annual planning, engagement of partners and the setting up of the Spotlight team and governance mechanisms.

1. Reflections on the country program document (CPD) design process

The Recipient UN Organizations (RUNOs) began the CPD design process with an analysis of the gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide situation in Ecuador, as well as the recommendations of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. UN agencies have been supporting national institutions for the implementation of the Comprehensive Law on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women (LOIPEVCM, in Spanish), and these experiences provided useful insights to determine the gaps on the implementation of national and international standards and the way forward.

The Human Rights Secretariat, governing body of the Comprehensive National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and responsible for the implementation of the LOIPEVCM, identified a set of priorities based on its role and the needs to strengthen policies and institutions.

UN Women, as lead agency, hosted a workshop, on February 20th, 2020, with civil society organizations to listen to their demands and to establish the Interim Group. A multi-actor workshop took place on March 10th, 2020, to discuss GBV priorities set by the government and the civil society. The European Union Delegation was co-host and an active participant of these meetings.

Civil society has been broadly represented in the project design. The high level of interest from different sectors was reflected in the diversity of representation, including indigenous and new masculinities organizations. During the drafting process there was consensus among the different stakeholders on the issues to be addressed by Spotlight. Interim Group recommendations were also incorporated into the six pillars of the CPD.

The final document considered issues and areas of work that could catalyze processes to ensure compliance with gender-based violence regulations and strengthen institutions, even beyond the period of implementation of the project. The implementing agencies assumed leadership of pillars, based on their mandates and strengths.

The UN inter agency Thematic Group on Gender was also consulted and complementary agencies' actions on EAW were articulated.

2. UN Reform

Spotlight Ecuador is committed to advancing the United Nations Development System reform indicators. This project is based on a holistic analysis of GBV and femicide, which led to the design of a comprehensive and multisectoral response, leveraging and combining the mandates and experience of the implementing UN agencies. Agencies worked jointly to ensure technically coherent CPD as a “one UN” team.

The Resident Coordinator has exercised her newly empowered role to facilitate interagency coordination across programming, operations, and program management. Integrated technical assistance will be provided across the six pillars for the effective application of the legal framework on the eradication of violence against women. An operating unit will be established, with the three RUNOs focal points, to share not only common costs but to have permanent dialogue on having more efficient operations.

The Ecuador program also promotes a more participatory and transparent intervention through the meaningful engagement of civil society and government partners. On February 8th, 2021, a Civil Society National Reference Group (CS-NRG) was established to advise and monitor the program. In addition, during the CPD development process, the Ecuador team laid the foundation for a permanent dialogue with government institutions. By fostering alliances with various sectors of the government, and seeking to secure high-level political buy-in, the Ecuador program has worked to ensure a greater impact of interventions with a higher potential for national ownership and sustainability.

3. Update on the context

Ecuador, like the rest of the world, suffered the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, which exacerbated existing inequalities, setting women as the most affected population.

According to the Inter-American Commission of Women (2020)¹, women represent a large proportion of the informal economy in all countries and the data indicate that the sectors of the economy most adversely affected by social isolation measures have a significant impact on women. The care workload has also increased for women and tasks are not equitably distributed. Global indicators show an increase in gender-based violence, which is exacerbated by women's confinement and limited access to public services for care, prevention, and punishment of violence, which are not considered essential. Furthermore, women found great limitations in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, since health services were focused on violence, which could increase maternal mortality.

Violence against women and girls alarmingly increased during the pandemic, however official statistics fluctuate as the quarantine progresses.

¹ <https://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/ArgumentarioCOVID19-ES.pdf>

The variation of statistics might be attributed to a multiplication of the number of obstacles women have for reporting violence and getting support, such as the reduction of spaces and channels to be sheltered in safe places, limited access to economic and technological resources, mobility restrictions and, above all, coexistence with the perpetrator or aggressor, which set women at a greater risk of violence (Secretariat for Human Rights, 2020).

In 2020, the ECU 911 emergency line recorded more than 113,000 calls classified as domestic violence. Out of these, 8,366 were received in December 2020. Calls reporting physical violence grew by 6.8% compared to November 2020 and were less than those reported during the same month in 2019. Other data state that GBV care in health facilities within the Ministry of Public Health decreased by 62% between March and May 2020, compared to the same period the previous year.

Caregiving, the arrangements of daily life in isolation and the partner's presence can increase tensions, conflicts and physical or psychological violence against women. In 2020, according to official data, the number of women victims of intentional homicide was 164; 78 of them were classified as femicide, the highest number since 2017. According to data from the NGO Aldea, in the same year the amount rose to 118 gender-related violent deaths².

Self-employed women or those working autonomously were the most impacted population of women due to their inability to open their businesses (68.5 out of 100 women). 33 out of 100 entrepreneur or self-employed women have had a decrease in their sales or income. While 76% of women increased their unpaid workload, 45% reduced their paid work hours or lost their jobs/income (UNWOMEN, 2020).

During the year 2020, the average labor income of workers showed a reduction of about 45%. The impact is greater for men, whose average labor income was reduced by 46% versus a 35% reduction for women. In the last decade, under regular conditions, female labor participation was reduced by 35% due to caregiving. The presence of partners at home -due to unemployment or telework- increases the unpaid care workload by 20% for women (National Institute of Statistics and Census [INEC, in Spanish]). This situation can increase tensions and result in violent environments.

As for the political context, the first round for Presidential and Assembly elections took place on February 7th, 2021, which has a direct impact on the program implementation. While project planning was carried out with government partners, it is necessary to anticipate mitigation measures due to the change of authorities.

There will be no substantive changes in planned activities due to the elections or COVID-19. Operationally, however, due to mobility restrictions and limited face-to-face events

² <http://www.fundacionaldea.org/mapas>



because of safety measures, the use of virtual means will be prioritized to advance the implementation of the project in Ecuador.

4. **Recruitments**

Since the approval of the program, the Ecuador team has worked to accelerate the recruitment process to avoid delays in implementation.

Preparation of terms of reference and selection processes of the Spotlight team have been jointly implemented by the three RUNOs, under UNW leadership. The three agencies, the RCO and the EU participated in the selection of the National Coordinator and the Communication Specialist.

On February 1st, 2021, the National Spotlight Coordinator and the Administrative Assistant joined the team. The Communication Specialist joined the team on March 1st, 2021. UN Women Spotlight team is completed: the focal point and the Administrative Assistant are full-time positions. The Spotlight focal point for UNDP and the Administrative Assistant have been selected and will join the team in April. UNFPA funded the Spotlight team during November and December; and, as of January 2021, their salaries are funded with Spotlight resources. Having a complete team in place allows for adequate technical and administrative coordination.

5. **Governance structures:**

The RCO and RUNOs jointly worked on the governance model proposal for Ecuador program. It includes three mechanisms: Steering Committee, Technical Committee, and Civil Society National Reference Group (CS-NRG), as well as a Communication Sub-Committee, linked to the Technical Committee and a Technical Coordination Unit.

The Steering Committee is composed of authorities from three public institutions (Human Rights Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and National Council for Gender Equality); two delegates from the CS-NRG (designated by the members to have rotating representation in the Steering Committee), the Head of the European Union Delegation, the Representatives of the three RUNOS (UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP) and the Resident Coordinator.

The Steering Committee is a political and strategic coordination body for oversight and decision making at the highest level on project implementation. It is co-chaired by the Resident Coordinator (representing the two international agencies leading the initiative, the United Nations, and the European Union) and by the Human Rights Secretariat (SDH), as the governing body for the implementation of the Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women (LOIPEVCM).



The Steering Committee held its first virtual meeting last 22nd March 2021 with full participation of its members. During the meeting, the governance model and the annual workplan were presented and approved in general terms. The NRG-also SC presented their budgeted Annual Work Plan.

The Technical Committee is an inter-agency advisory body to ensure consistency and technical quality in project implementation. This body is composed by the agencies program officers, Spotlight focal points, UE focal point, and the National Coordinator. The Human Rights Secretariat and the National Council for Gender Equality authorities requested to have representation in this level of governance; this proposal was accepted by the Steering Committee via email.

The Communication Sub-Committee has the mission to advise and monitor the implementation of the Communication Strategy. It is composed by the RUNOs communication officers, the Spotlight Communication specialist, the EU communication focal point and the National Coordinator.

As for the establishment of the Civil Society National Reference Group, a public call was made, and 39 nominations were submitted. Delegates of the implementing agencies and two delegates of the Interim Reference Group participated in this selection process. The selected candidates have been officially notified in February 2021.

The CS-NRG comprise thirteen leaders from different provinces of Ecuador, including five of the six municipalities targeted by the program. Among the members, there are indigenous and afro Ecuadorian women, as well as women from rural and urban areas. There is a woman with disabilities, women from NGOs, national and grassroots women's organizations.

According to the CS-NRG Terms of Reference, the members will provide technical advisory to the Spotlight team, based on their expertise. They will act as advocates for women's rights, to make visible the problem of violence against women and girls and femicide and disseminate information about the project. The group will play a relevant role in the implementation of the project at the local level, ensuring the application of the *leaving no one behind* principle.

The Coordination Unit is a support body for governance mechanisms, whose functions are designed to implement the project's strategic and technical orientations and produce information for timely decision making.

6. Procurement, contracting and implementing partner selection

The procurement of two consultancies are ongoing: an individual consultancy to develop a reparation public policy for GBV victims and an individual consultancy for the design and implementation of the Violence Observatory. Both are priority activities for the Human Rights Secretariat, so their timely procurement will be an important step in building mutual trust.

The Spotlight team is seeking the best implementation modalities to ensure quality of the results, an efficient budget execution, and, at the same time, to secure that at least 30% of the resources are channeled through civil society organizations.

UNFPA works through implementing partners' modality which is defined as "the entity to which the Executive Director has entrusted the implementation of UNFPA program activities specified in a signed document". The implement partner is responsible and accountable for successfully managing the programmatic and financial aspects of the workplan and delivering expected results. To engage with an implementing partner, UNFPA has opened a competitive call for proposals through "Expression of Interests" via local media to ensure the highest quality of service, including the ability to apply innovative strategies to meet priorities, in the most cost-effective manner. The selection process was implemented as follows:

1. Call for proposals from 18th January to 9th February 2021.
2. Review of proposals by UNFPA technical and operational staff to assess the technical capacity and comparative advantage of the potential implementing partner.
3. The Representative takes an informed and transparent decision based on the technical qualifications of the implementing partner, cost effectiveness and best fit to efficiently deliver the outputs.
4. Notification the selected partners and subscription of the Implementing Partner Agreement, including a workplan.

7. **Initial engagement of partners**

Since the CPD development process began in March 2020, planned activities have already started. In January 2021, a technical meeting with the Human Rights Secretariat and RUNOs was held to adjust the Work Plan and to agree on ways of working.

Meetings have also been held with other State authorities (Ministry of Public Health, National Council of the Judiciary, Ministry of Government, the National Council of Gender Equality), the academia and CSOs to establish strategic alliances for the implementation of the program and to ensure that planned activities begin before the change of government. MoUs are also being executed between the Human Rights Secretariat and UN entities.

Civil society actors, such as the Network of Shelters for victims of violence, and academic institutions have also been involved to strengthen alliances and to contribute to the project sustainability.

The EU delegation has been a strategic partner throughout this process. It participated in selection processes, working meetings and on the first Steering Committee and CSO reference group meetings. The launching event, in Ecuador on February 23, 2021, was co-organized by UN and EU. According to the governance model, the EUD focal point

participates in the Technical Committee and the EUD communication specialist is part of the Communication Sub Committee.

Concept notes and terms of reference have been jointly prepared by the three RUNOs and shared with the Human Rights Secretariat and with the Reference Group. During the reported period: technical assistance for the implementation of the Violence Registry System; design of the violence prevention campaign; and a process to strengthen women's networks and capacities to response to violence against women and girls.

8. Conduct of the baseline study

The procurement of the baseline study is ongoing. Terms of reference were prepared by implementing agencies and review by national counterparts. The consultancy will start mid-April 2021 and has a 3-month period.

9. Challenges/mitigating measures

The change of government and authorities, mainly the Human Rights Secretariat and the National Council for Gender Equality, to take place on May 2021, is the main challenge that could impact the implementation pace of the project. As mitigation measure, the governance model will allow clear rules for the engagement of new authorities. MoUs and work plans with State counterparts have also been established to secure program implementation.

At a political level, the RC, as part of the UNCT strategy on elections, advocated on the issue of GVB with presidential candidates, both in the first and second rounds, to raise awareness on violence against women and girls and femicide and to encourage them to sustain actions and allocate resources to address these challenges.

In response to COVID-19, face-to-face activities are implemented with the appropriate biosafety measures and in accordance with the provisions of the National and Cantonal Emergency Committee.

The Ecuador team is also working on strategies to reach communities to ensure that no one is left behind: audio visual and printed material, community radio, billboards/advertising screens, translation into local languages, sign language translation, etc. The team is also focused on building partnerships with implementing partners and local organizations to provide emerging and creative responses to unforeseen or new restrictive measures.

10. CS-NGR recommendations

The integration of the National Civil Society Reference Group represents a challenge to the way of working in which CSOs have a voice but a standing mechanism within the project governance model. The Spotlight initial phase has served as an adapting period in which agencies, government and CSRG focused on understanding the role of this mechanism and jointly defining methods of work.

The members of the Reference Group have organized their work according to the six pillars of the project, in which they participate on interest and expertise basis. Delegates of the reference group provided inputs to the Terms of Reference, and they were also represented in the first Executive Committee meeting.

In general, the CSRG members recommended improving the communication and working mechanisms with implementing agencies to ensure their point of view is considered in the project implementation, at political and technical level, and their inputs are considered in the documents drafting process. They remarked the importance of becoming strong and strategic allies for the fulfillment of the project's objectives and goals. They also pointed out the importance of using inclusive and non-sexist language that considers ethnic-racial, gender and urban-rural diversity.

Members of the Reference Group expect their participation to be articulated in the design, implementation, and evaluation phases of the project, ensuring adequate communication and coordination. The CSRG members highlighted the voluntary basis of their participation in this mechanism and requested a proper planning to ensure they articulate their activities with this support.