



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women

## **INCORPORATING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE GENERAL STATE BUDGET OF ECUADOR: LEARNING FROM THE FLIGHT OF THE GEESE**

### **Case Study on Gender Responsive Budgeting.**

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## INCORPORATING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE GENERAL STATE BUDGET OF ECUADOR: LEARNING FROM THE FLIGHT OF THE GEESE<sup>1</sup>

Each time a goose flaps its wings, it produces an upwash of the next bird in the formation. By flying in a V-shaped formation, the flock as a whole, it increases its range of flight by 71% in relation to what it may fly if it flew on its own. When the leader goose gets tired, it leaves its place by rotating backwards in the formation and another goose leads it.



***“The important thing in this experience is that we did it like in the “flight of the geese”. Each of us has contributed from our strength, leading the corresponding duties and supporting the work of the rest. When any of us got tired, he or she went backwards and other took the leadership.”***

**(Soraya Arevalo, National Director of Fiscal Equality of the Ministry of Finances of Ecuador)**

### 1. Background

Ecuador is a country located in the North-West of South America. Its 256,370 square kilometers houses one of the regions with a greater biological diversity of the world. According with the 2010 census, the country has a population of 14,483,499 inhabitants (50,4% women) of whom approximately two thirds live in urban areas and a third in rural areas. Ecuador is also a multicultural and multiethnic country, where indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian people and nationalities, mestizo population, montubios and white people cohabitate.

In Ecuador, like in many countries of Latin America, from the decade of the eighties and until 2006, the successive governments applied a model of structural adjustment imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of the conditions to receive and maintain the flow of loans from this organism to the country. During this period the payment of the external debt, it reached between 25% and 50% of the State Budget, dramatically reducing the opportunities of increasing social investment. Consequently, in 2006, poverty measured in terms of Unsatisfied Basic Needs reached 54%, sharpening in the rural area where 90% of the population in the Coast and 80% in the Amazonia lived in this situation<sup>2</sup>.

Apart from social inequalities, the country also registered severe inequalities between men and women. For instance, in 2005, women unemployment was more than twice the men's (8% and 3.5%, respectively) and the men average income was 65.6% higher than women's<sup>3</sup>. According to the results of the first Time Use Survey made in the country this year, the women global workload (adding paid and non-paid work) was superior to men's in 18 hours a week in average. However, in spite of the remarked gender inequality indicators, the assignation directed to the gender equal

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<sup>1</sup> Case Study on Gender Responsive Budgeting. Author: Raquel Coello Cremades, Consultant of the Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, UN Women.

<sup>2</sup> Technical Secretary of the Coordinator Ministry of Social Development-Integrated System of Social Indicators of Ecuador, quoted in Armas (2009)

<sup>3</sup> Pérez, Alba, Gallardo, Claudio. *Mujeres y Hombres del Ecuador en cifras II*, CONAMU-INEC-UNIFEM, Quito, 2005.

opportunities only represents 1% of the social budget<sup>4</sup>, which at the beginning of the decade of 2000 barely represented between a 5 and 5% of the GDP, one of the lowest of Latin America<sup>5</sup>.

## 2.-Description of the experience

### 2.1 Goals and key actors of the Process

In 2004, the National Council of Women (CONAMU)<sup>6</sup>, supported by the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)<sup>7</sup>, decided to initiate an incidence process to incorporate the gender perspective in the General State Budget. As a first step, between 2004 and 2005, an investigation<sup>8</sup> was accomplished to analyze both the budgetary process of the country and the assignation of resources for gender equality. With its results, a process of jointly consideration began with the CONAMU and the UN Women teams to define the plan to follow in the construction of a gender responsive state budget. The proposals were captured in the Project *“Incorporación de Género en la Política Fiscal del Ecuador” (Gender Incorporation in the Fiscal Policy of Ecuador)* that included these goals:

- a) To increase awareness and to influence institutions and organizations involved in the administration of public funds to incorporate the gender perspective in the planning and budgeting.
- b) To generate capacities and technical agreements in the Ministry of Economics and Finances, National Secretary of Planning and other relevant institutions to incorporate gender instruments and criteria in the directives and processes of formulation and monitoring of the budget.
- c) To generate sustainability conditions of the process through a permanent accompaniment to the instances involved in the planning and budgeting of the State.

The three main axis or strategies of this Project are related in graphic 1.

In January 2006, CONAMU achieved the declaration of **“execution priority”** from the National Secretariat of Planning and Development (SENPLADES). This way, the project took part in the Public Investment System (SNIP) with

**GRAPHIC 1: Components of the Project Gender Incorporation in the Fiscal Policy of Ecuador CONAMU-UNIFEM.**

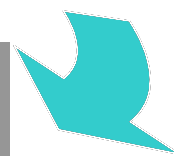
#### INFLUENCE AXIS

Incorporation of Gender in the System of Planning, Programming and Budgeting



Resource assignment to implement Gender Pro-Equality Policies, Priority for Women

Empowerment of women organizations for the monitoring and participation in budgetary decision making



Source: Armas (2009):

<sup>4</sup> Vásconez, Alison: *ECUADOR: Política fiscal con*

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF data, quoted in Armas (2009).

<sup>6</sup> National mechanism for gender equality and Council of Gender Equality.

<sup>7</sup> In that moment, the UN Development Fund for Women UNIFEM.

<sup>8</sup> *“ECUADOR: Fiscal Policy with Gender Perspective in the National Budget”* developed by Alison Vásconez, consultant of CONAMU-UNIFEM.

a specific item, included in the CONAMU budget.

Simultaneously, the process of conformation of alliances began, with the consecution in September 2005 of the signature of the **Framework Cooperation Agreement** between the CONAMU, the Ministry of Finances (MF), the SENPLADES and the UN WOMEN, with the objective of *promoting and consolidating the insertion of the equality perspective in the debate, design and implementation of the fiscal and budgetary policies in Ecuador and implementing the institutional mechanisms needed for this aim.*

After the signature of the agreement, thanks to the political will of the authorities and the commitment of some intermediaries, the work in the interior of the MF began. A first step was the creation, in September 2007, of the **“Coordination for the Economic Gender Equality”**, within the Deputy Secretary of Social and Solidarity-Based Economics. Though this Deputy Secretary was moved to another Ministry, the team of the “coordination”<sup>9</sup> stayed by choice in the MF, and they decided to conform, under the direct ward of the Minister<sup>10</sup>, the “Gender Unit” of the Ministry of Finances. After some years of work and an important exercise of influence, eventually, the staff of the unit, with the support of the authorities of the MF, achieved in 2010 its institutionalization within the ministerial schedule, as the *Division of Gender Equality (now the National Division of Fiscal Equality)*.

From the creation of this instance (first as a Unit and then as a Division), the MF started its own path in the process of incorporation of the gender perspective in the economic and fiscal policy. Thus, in July 2008, with the support of the UN WOMEN and the German Agency for the International Cooperation (GIZ is its acronym in German)<sup>11</sup>, the Project *“Participación y Perspectiva de Género en el Presupuesto” (Participation and Gender Perspective in the Budget)* was set out, with the aims, on the one hand, of *providing the staff of the Ministry with the knowledge and instruments about budgets with a participative and gender perspective, that allowed a better comprehension of the diversity and differences of the needs of the citizenship*, and on the other hand, provide the MF with the knowledge and tools needed, to influence the work of the institution and integrate the citizenship, in a better comprehension about the budget programming and the use of the public resources.

The support of the UN WOMEN and the GIZ was translated in both **financial and technical assistance**. This last was developed, on the one hand, **directly**, through a permanent accompaniment during the elaboration and discussion of the instruments to include the gender perspective in the budget, the elaboration of the argumentative technical documents and the support to sustain the institutionalization of the process in the Ministry. On the other hand, it was also supported through **specialized consultancies**, which allowed the formation of the team of the Gender Unit (later the Division of Fiscal Equality of the MF) and the development of the training and awareness process directed to the whole staff of the ministry.

In relation with the **SENPLADES**, the first steps were produced within the framework of the formulation of the National Plan of Development: “Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir” (“National

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<sup>9</sup> Conformed in that moment by Soraya Arévalo y Nancy Sáenz.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Elsa Viteri, was sub-secretary of Budget, then vice-minister of finances between September 2008 and April 2010. During all the period as authority of the Ministry she permanently supported the process and particularly the work of the unit.

<sup>11</sup> In that moment, the German Agency of Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

Plan for the Good Living”) (PNBV), where with the support of the CONAMU and the UN WOMEN, people work to incorporate the gender perspective in a transversal manner. Once the Plan was approved, the UN WOMEN continued to support the SENPLADES as a responsible entity for its coordination and evaluation. To do so, both institutions signed a collaboration agreement with the aim of contributing to the result of the Plan that established that *“the institutional structure of the State applies –and the citizenship accedes and participates in – a efficient, transparent, integrated and sustainable public management and it promotes territorial development policies, decentralization, deconcentration and social and gender equality”*. In the framework of this agreement, and through specialized technical assistances, support was provided in the generation of instruments, methodologies and capacities to incorporate the gender perspective and interculturality in the process of monitoring and evaluation of the PNBV, the construction of sex and ethnic-disaggregated indicators and the incorporation of the gender and interculturality perspective in the instruments of planning at local level, among others.

Another key actor in the process, that later joined the initiative was the **Parliamentary Group for the Women Rights of the National Assembly**, created in October 2009, with the aim of monitoring the commitments of the State to improve women conditions and reduce gender inequalities. The Group, in coordination with the Technical Office of monitoring and evaluation of the budget of the Assembly and with the support of the UN WOMEN and the United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA), has been working since 2011 with the aim of incorporating the gender perspective in the analysis and budgetary reports to influence and stand for adequate and sufficient budgets for strategic plans, programs and projects for gender equality and women human rights.

Eventually, in the Ecuadorian process, it is important to remark the role played by the social organizations, particularly **women organizations**. Some of them, like the Centre of Studies for Alternative Development (CEDEAL), “Casa Refugio Matilde”, the National Forum of Women, and the Youth Christian Association have developed an important work of influence to achieve the funding and institutionalization of mechanisms to allow the implementation of the National Plan of Violence against Women and, simultaneously, they have established social groups to monitor both the execution of the resources and the quality of the services. Even though this work has been developed mainly in local level, it has evidenced the importance of having specific policies, institutions and resources to advance in the accomplishment of the National Agenda for the Gender Equality, agreed between the State and Women Organizations. Besides, the work at the villages has allowed involving women that were traditionally excluded from participation spaces, as rural women, urban women from the most impoverished sectors and indigene and afro-Ecuadorian women.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 Main strategies

As we have seen, different actors in different moments have intervened in the process of incorporating the gender perspective in the State budget of Ecuador. Each of them has set in diverse strategies to advance towards their objectives. Among the most important we can point:

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<sup>12</sup> An example of this participation can be seen in this video:  
[http://www.presupuestoygenero.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=631:taller-de-presentacion-de-veedurias-presupuestarias-a-los-recursos-locales&catid=184:videos&Itemid=400054](http://www.presupuestoygenero.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=631:taller-de-presentacion-de-veedurias-presupuestarias-a-los-recursos-locales&catid=184:videos&Itemid=400054)

- **Conquering political and technical wills:** Public budgets are technical but also political processes. For this reason, at their start, the CONAMU and the UN WOMEN conducted a work as a permanent lobby to obtain the commitment of the key institutions in the start, as the MF and the SENPLADES, and to capture it in the Agreement. After that, the awareness and the political dialogue have been constant strategies in the process, developed by several actors such as: The Unit of Fiscal Equality of the MF, - both in the interior of the institution as the sectorial ministries -, the Commission of Transition or the Parliamentary Group for the Right of Women. As it has been pointed by the participants of the experience themselves, the awareness in gender served as a multiplication strategy to obtain a critical mass of people, in and out of the Ministry, so they could apply and reply the gender perspective in their institutional budgets, as in their professional and labor execution<sup>13</sup>.
- **Research and analysis as basis for action.** In 2004, a background about the incorporation of gender in the budget existed at local level. However, the influence in the national budget required a particular and differenced knowledge. For this reason, other of the strategies launched at the start was the diagnostic research, which was the basis to define later the path to follow. The construction of proposals based in the analysis of the available information has been since then a constant in this experience.
- **Influence in the regulatory framework:** The public Budget is a high regulated process. Therefore, one of the most important strategies to achieve the incorporation of the gender perspective in it is to influence in the related regulations. In the Ecuadorian experience, the influence in the regulatory framework was made at the start, through **budgetary guidelines**<sup>14</sup>, that, thanks to the work developed by the MF, have included since 2007 specific articles to guide the State institutions about how to incorporate the gender perspective in the budget.<sup>15</sup>

Other of the most important landmarks of influence in the regulatory framework was the incorporation of the gender equality as a binding perspective within the **Organic Code of Planning and Public Finances**, approved in October 2010. To do so, it was necessary the combination of technical work developed from the Division of Fiscal Equality of the MF with the technical and political influence of the then- Vice-minister herself.<sup>16</sup>

As consequence of what was established in the Code, the new internal rules of procedures of the Ministry of Finances established as an institutional mandate the incorporation of the equality perspective in the budget.

- **Capacity building.** The regulation can force, but the experience shows that to fulfill it well, it is necessary to know how. This is particularly important in a field of work as new as the gender budgets, where traditionally dissociated knowledge's are interacted (gender perspective and public finances).

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<sup>13</sup> Testimony extracted from Almeida (2013).

<sup>14</sup> The budgetary guidelines are the general guides of politics and techniques to formulate the institutional budgetary preforms, which are issued by the Ministry of Finances for each tax year. The Budgetary Guidelines, because they are binding, constitute an important tool to implement the instruments developed to incorporate the gender perspective in the budget (Almeida, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Detail from the Guidelines that appear in the document Almeida (2013).

<sup>16</sup> Maria Dolores Almeida was Vice/Ministry of Finances between April 2010 and November 2012. She had previously supported the process very intensively as responsible of the Program of Modernization and Decentralization Anteriormente había apoyado el proceso de manera muy estrecha como responsable del Programa Modernización y Descentralización (PROMODE) of the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ)

In the Ecuadorian experience, just in the period 2008-2012, the MF organized 43 training events for both the ministry staff as those responsible for the planning and budget of the sectorial ministries. Most of the events focused on the articulation of the concepts of budgets and gender, but mostly in the in the practical application of the instruments developed by the Ministry itself to integrate the gender perspective in the budgetary cycle. The number of people trained or made aware was 3.380 (62% women and 38% men). 26% participants came from the Ministry of Finances and 74% from other public institutions and NGO's<sup>17</sup>.

- **Development of technical instruments and methodologies.** At the same time as the process of capacity building, other strategy allowing us to move from the conceptual to the operative was the development of concrete and practical technical instruments to analyze and incorporate the gender perspective in the public budget. The principal instruments that were developed were made jointly with the public workers that had been trained before.

In the case of the MF, apart from budgetary guidelines mentioned above, the most important instrument was the development of the **gender budgetary classifications**<sup>18</sup>. At first, the MF developed a specific category (denominated "*Función K*" ("*K Function*") of Gender Equality) within the functional catalogue of expenditure. The K Function put the gender equality at the same level as the rest of the functions of the State such as: health, education or defense. However, after two years of implementation, the evaluation made by several of the sectorial institutions that had used it identified precisely as the principal weakness, the impossibility to register simultaneously one activity into two functions<sup>19</sup>. Consequently, the MF developed a specific proposal of gender budgetary classification, creating the *Clasificador de Orientación del Gasto de Políticas de Igualdad* (*Classification of Expenditure Orientation in Gender Equality Policies*). This classification, applicable to the whole of the budgetary lines, allows us to order, quantify and recognize the work the State made in the field of gender equality. Besides, these categories correspond with the prioritized lines in the Plan for Equal Opportunities, what make us easier to know to which strategic focus this plan contributes<sup>20</sup>.

For its part, the SENPLADES works with the support of the CONAMU and the UN WOMEN to include the gender perspective in the formulation of sectorial policies and the design of the operative planning, achieving the incorporation of gender indicators in the "*Manual para el diseño de los Planes Operativos Anuales*" ("*Manual for the design of Annual Operative Plans*") and the "*Manual de Políticas sectoriales*" ("*Manual of sectorial Policies*").

- **Institutional reinforcement.** The institutions of the State responsible for the Planning and Budget count with a much consolidated history of working in the field of public finances, where gender topics have not been, however, present. For this reason, beyond awareness and capacity building, the Ecuadorian experience was heavily supported by an institutional

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<sup>17</sup> Almeida (2013).

<sup>18</sup> The budgetary classifications are accounting instruments that allow us to organize and present the information of the operations registered in the Budget, with the objective of making easier the decision making during it.

<sup>19</sup> That means that, if an activity contributes to several functions this classification only allows one to be registered, forcing to choose the most relevant function. For example, in the case of a sexual and reproductive health program, it could be registered in the functional catalogue of health or gender; the institutions must register it in a sole catalogue, and in general, the preferred to register it in health. Consequently, the resources directed to the close of gaps of gender were not totally visible.

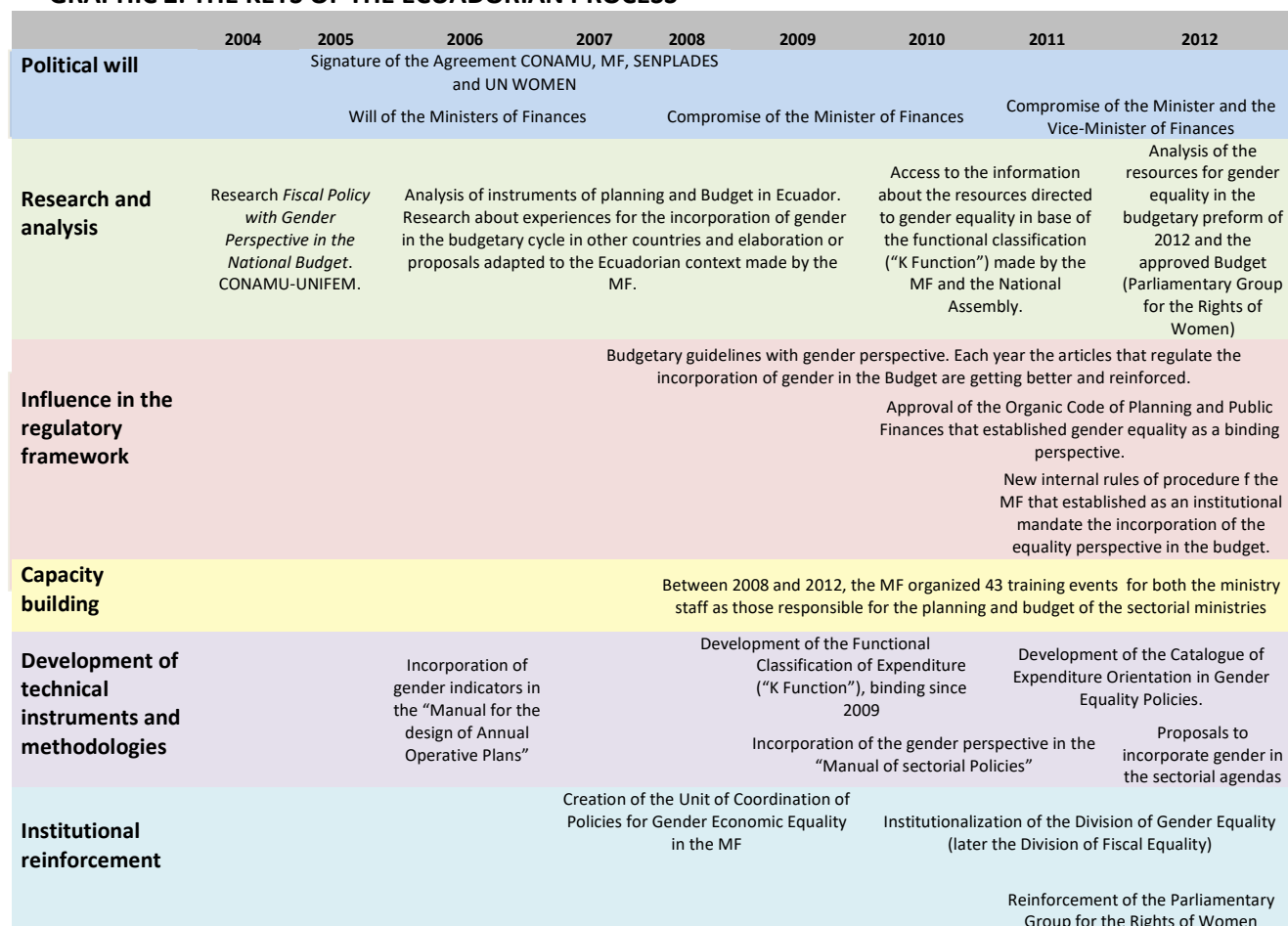
<sup>20</sup> The content of the *Classification of Expenditure Orientation in Gender Equality Policies* is available in:

<http://www.finanzas.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/08/D.-Anexo-2-Cat%C3%A1logo-de-Pol%C3%ADticas-de-Igualdad.pdf>.

reinforcement strategy, advocating for the creation and reinforcement of mechanisms in the interior of the institution, with available specialized knowledge in the gender field and public finances and that could be the catalyst of each initiative.

For instance, in the case of the MF, the creation of the Unit of Gender and its later institutionalization in the ministerial schedule as the Division of Fiscal Equality is the key to understand the results achieved in the experience and the level of ownership generated to the interior of the MF.

**GRAPHIC 2: THE KEYS OF THE ECUADORIAN PROCESS**



## 2.3 Main results

The main results achieving to this day in the Ecuadorian experience of incorporating gender in the process of planning and budget can be summed up in the following:

- ✓ Gender equality is included in the **National Plan of Development** (National Plan for the Good Living), through the inclusion of: 16 gender explicit Policies (from 92) and 119 explicit strategies to improve women rights and gender equality<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Comisión de Transición Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres y la Igualdad de Género, Informe sobre el cumplimiento del Consenso de Quito, pág. 11, 2010. Citado en Almeida (2013).



- ✓ Since 2011, the incorporation of gender criteria in the budget is mandatory thanks to its **inclusion in the organic rule that regulates the elaboration of the public budget (the Code of Planning and Public Finances)**. Among other precepts, the rule obligates the entities to elaborate each year an appendix with the information of the expenditure directed to the “Close of Gaps of Gender” in the Budgetary Preform.
- ✓ In relation to the **institutional capacities**, the Ministry of Finances now counts with a responsible influence in the incorporation of the gender perspective in the fiscal policy and the public Budget, institutionalized within the ministerial schedule. The Division of Fiscal Equality established as part of the Deputy Secretary of Fiscal Policy. Additionally, and thanks to the process of construction of institutional capacities that this instance has promoted, now more than 50% of the Ministry staff is aware and count with basic knowledge about budget with gender perspective.

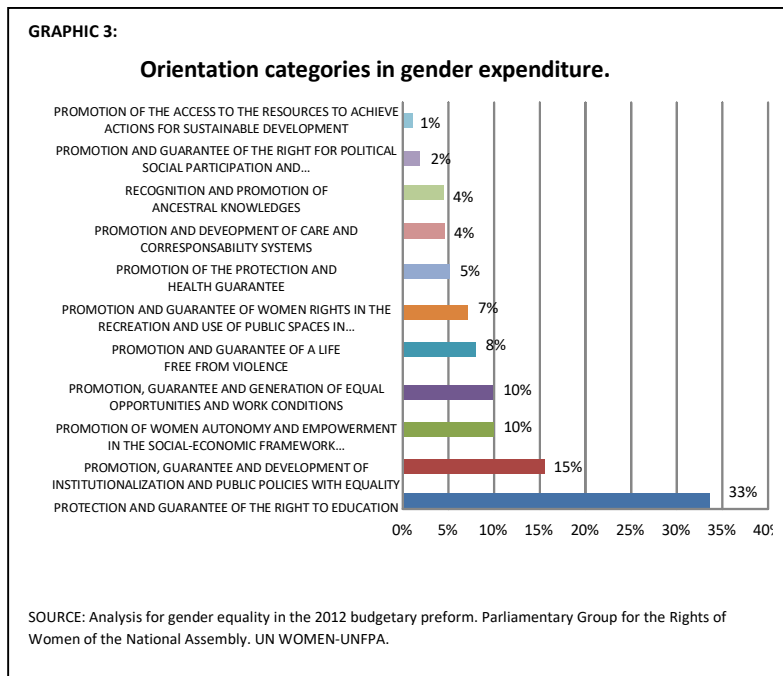
In the interior of the Assembly, too, the capacities of the Parliamentary Group have improved women rights in the reading and comprehension of the budgetary information as an instrument to permit the promotion of a greater accomplishment of the national, regional and international compromises to promote Gender Equality between men and women in Ecuador.

- ✓ This greater institutional capacity has also permit **the improvement and enforcement of the instruments and methodologies** used during the budgetary cycle incorporating the gender perspective on them. In this result, we can remark:
  - ♦ The development of **accounting instruments that allow us to register the resources directed to gender equality**. Initially, through a specific category (“K” function) within the **functional catalogue of expenditure** and then, since the budgetary preform of 2012, through **the classification of expenditure orientation in gender equality policies**. The different established categories gave answer to the priority lines of the Plan of Non Discrimination and Good Living for Ecuadorian Women, which allows the monitoring of the assignation and execution of resources for their implementation.
  - ♦ The incorporation of permanent gender criteria in the annual **Budgetary Guidelines** since 2010. Among other elements, the guidelines obliges the sectorial entities to incorporate the gender perspective in at least one activity of every programs and to incorporate an instructive to use the “k function” of the functional catalogue and then, the classification of expenditure orientation in gender equality policies.
  - ♦ The incorporation of gender criteria in the mechanisms used to the elaboration of the annual operative programs (“Manual for the design of Annual Operative Plans”) and sectorial planning (“Manual of sectorial Policies”) issued by the SENPLADES.
- ✓ Thanks to the improvement of the instruments and methodologies developed by the MF and the SENPLADES, with the work of training and influence carried out with the sectorial ministries, in the budget of 2011 we achieve **three times the total of the resources assigned**

for the fulfillment of gender equality moving from \$ 19.6 to 54.7 million<sup>22</sup>. For the 2012 budget, with the entry into force of the new classification of expenditure orientation for gender equality policies and the possibility to evaluate the whole of the budget, the codified amount was almost \$2,700 million, from which 92,3%<sup>23</sup> were finally executed.

- ✓ Using the information generated through the classifications, since 2009 we count with the **annual gender analysis of the General State Budget**, elaborated by the MF and sent to the National Assembly as appendix in the Budgetary Preform and the Reports of Budgetary Execution.

In addition, the Assembly counts with a “Guía Metodológica par el análisis presupuestario con enfoque de género” (*“Methodological Guide for the budgetary analysis with gender perspective”*), that allows us to analyze the budgetary information from a gender perspective and to make easier the monitoring and control of its execution (See graphic 3).



- ✓ The information of the classifications has also been used as a **fundamental input in the work of the Budgetary Monitoring to the National Plan of Eradication of Gender Violence (PNEVG)** that women organizations are carrying out.
- ✓ For all the accomplished advances, the work of the Ministry of Finances to achieve gender responsible budgets has been recognized as a better practice worldwide, and seminars and exchanges have been made with other countries such as: Mexico, Morocco and Zambia. It has also been presented in numerous international events and seminars and, in 2010 it was awarded with the **First Prize of the Word Contest on Gender Experiences**, organized by the GTZ (now GIZ).

### 3.- Analysis of the process

#### 3.1 Factors in the context that had a positive influence in the experience.

<sup>22</sup> Almeida (2013).

<sup>23</sup> La información generada a través de los clasificadores presupuestarios de género está disponible en reportes estadísticos a través de la página Web del Ministerio de Finanzas <http://www.finanzas.gob.ec/reportes-de-equidad/>

The political situation of the country in 2005, after the demission by popular pressure of the then president Lucio Gutierrez and the high demand of the social movements for deep changes in the State, generated a **political and social climate of enforceability**, in where the teams of the new government were forced to show certain opening. As it has been remarked by the actors of the process themselves<sup>24</sup>, this context seems to be determinant to find some loopholes that permit the CONAMU and the UN WOMEN to negotiate an Agreement with the MF and the SENPLADES to commit its institutional wills.

Other element of the Ecuadorian context that had a key influence in the development of the experience was the **new Constitution** approved in 2008, in where there are a series of obligations that the State has to fulfill to achieve the effective realization of the gender equality, among which it is included the “formulation and execution of policies to achieve equality between men and women and the incorporation of the gender perspective in plans and programs”. It is also explicated that “the State will bring technical assistance for its mandatory application in the public sector”<sup>25</sup>. This text was constituted in the principal agreement to the interior of the institutions of the State (as the MF or the SENPLADES), because the incorporation of gender in the planning and public budget was no longer a topic that had to be worked because there was an authority that had political will or because cooperation was supporting it to became to be mandatory.

Another element that made the Ecuadorian experience easier, and among others, that make possible its level of institutionalization obtained, was the **political will and personal commitment of key actors**: On the one hand, the conviction of the authorities and the technical team of the **national mechanism of women** (then the CONAMU) of the pertinence and importance that have the influence in the State budget from the gender perspective, was fundamental to start the process. This priority for the agenda of the gender equality in the country could also find key allies, both in the authorities and the technical staff of the **institutions involved in the budgetary process**, that make possible the start of the process and then they appropriate it for themselves becoming the true actors of the initiative<sup>26</sup>.

To this will and compromise of the actors of the stat, it was also added the specialized, permanent and supported accompaniment of the UN WOMEN and the GIZ, completed a kind of “virtuous circle” where cooperation, in line with the priorities of the country, began to support where the conditions were created and there was real will to advance, generating synergies, joining efforts, completing technical and operative knowledge and making possible the long-term sustainment of a complex and ambitious process that require time to achieve its maturity.

### ***3.2 Main difficulties and strategies to overcome them.***

Despite the important achievements and favorable context, the Ecuadorian process has not been exempt from **difficulties**. One of the most important- common to these kind of process that

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<sup>24</sup> Así se recoge en Armas (2009)

<sup>25</sup> Art. 70 de la Constitución de la República del Ecuador.

<sup>26</sup> In the case of the MF, apart from the direct support given from Minister Maria Elsa Viteri and Vice-Minister Maria Dolores Almeida, it was fundamental the role played by Soraya Arévalo, who at the beginning, as Administrative Deputy Secretary of the MF, was one of the fundamental supports to negotiate the agreement and later, as responsible of the unit of gender (later the Division of Fiscal Equity), she drive with Nancy Saenz all the work in the interior of the ministry. Within the Assembly it also have been fundamental the role of the Parliamentary Group for the Rights of Women leaded by Maria Paula Romo, to deepen the process and to expand it to the legislative field.

require long-term actions to achieve results- has been **achieving the permanent support of the different authorities and public workers**. In Ecuador there is a huge rotation both in the technical and political positions, which implies in practice a permanent process of awareness. In the case of the MF this awareness has been made showing how the incorporation of gender in the budgets is used as an instrument that improves decision making and permits to fulfill the mandates established in the Constitution and the Code of Finances. This work was complemented with high doses of creativity interested in a communication strategy through which the Division of Gender makes itself “visible” in many ways (stationary items, personalized messages, and competitions, conferences) to be “present” in the mind of the institution staff.

In addition to the awareness, the rotation of the staff also demands an effort of permanent training. However, one of the main difficulties to properly answer this need is that **public institutions are reluctant to assign resources to the capacitation of its staff**. In this aspect, cooperation has played a fundamental role, because it has permitted to finance training events, studies and exchanges. Besides the strengthening of the capacities, this support has been used as a way to motivate public workers, to whom being able to do specialization courses or having the opportunity to count with the experience of other places means a form of recognition and a motivation element. In the case of the MF, too, counting with the Unit of Gender/Division of Fiscal Equality in the interior of the institution was fundamental to face high rotation and lead the permanent effort of training.

Paradoxically, other of the greatest difficulties of the process was to achieve the institutionalization of this mechanism. Moving from a “ad-hoc” unit (that directly depended from the Minister but that it can disappear at any time) to a National Division approved in the institution schedule was a long process that has to defeat the resistance of many senior officers of the Ministry, that didn’t understand the need to count with a specific unit, because they consider gender a transversal topic. These difficulties were overcome in a moment of internal re-structuration, with a high implicated Vice-Minister in the process and also thanks to, among other things, the expansion of her responsibilities, moving from working not only in equality topics but also in generational and ethnical ones.

Other of the difficulties the incorporation of the gender perspective in the Budget of the Ecuadorian State faces, and which is inherent to the planning and budgeting process, is the need of intervention of a huge **amount of actors**: From the SENPLADES (which determines the suitability of the programs and projects), the MF (which establishes the guidelines to formulate the budgets, prepares the preform and manages the financial system to count the resources), the Assembly (which approves the budgets and regulates its execution), the sectorial ministries and local entities (which are who truly have the authority to propose and execute the concrete actions to contribute to the promotion of gender equality). It is complex to cover each link in the chain because it involves working with a great number of institutions adapting the strategies to each of their processes, but, at the same time, working in a coordinated manner to achieve coherence and to achieve that the results obtained in a phase of the cycle reverse in the others.

This difficulty has been particularly complex in the Ecuadorian case due to the status of the actual mechanism for the gender equality, which is “in transition” since 2009, still pending the approval of the Law that will regulate its running. This makes difficult its running, reduce resources and weaken its possibilities to act and go with the process. We tried to make up for many of this lacks with a huge effort and commitment of the little staff of the *Commission of Transition* and the

public workers themselves of the Division of Fiscal Equality of the MF, even their possibilities to respond to the whole of the existent demands in the sectorial ministries and decentralized entities in the actual conditions is limited.

Partially derived from this situation, other of the difficulties of the process has been **the lack of political stance of a national strategy for gender equality**. Even though at the beginning of this experience we counted with the current *Plan for Equal Opportunities*, after the end of it, many years passed until the creation of the new *Plan of Equality, No-Discrimination and Good Living* and the *National Gender Agenda*. This made difficult the adequate use of the instruments like the classifications, because the sectorial institutions don't have clear what they have to include, so in occasions this produces an incorrect record. On the other hand, the role of influence that from instances such as the Assembly could be made has been limited, because they didn't count with a well-defined policies framework to make possible the establishment of priorities, beyond the violence topic (which was strongly positioned thanks to the existence of the National Plan for the Eradication of Violence against Women).

### 3.3 Strengths and weaknesses.

The following chart shows a summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the experience:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Legal framework that protects the experience (Constitution and Organic Code of Planning and Public Finances).	
Alliances generated with the different instances related to the public budget (MF, SENPLADES, and National Assembly) and their will of articulation between them and the Commission of Transition.	Lack of formal spaces of articulation to permit a better coordination.
Synergies generated with cooperation.	Cuts to important allies in the process (UN WOMEN and GIZ)
Political will of the highest authorities during the process.	Dependence of the Division of Fiscal Equality of the MF from several hierarchical levels, through which we have to pass to achieve the decision to be made by the highest authority.
Institutionalization achieved through the Division of Fiscal Equality in the MF.	Shortage of staff in the Division of Equality of the MF, which does not cover all the needs of training and support it receives.
Incorporation in the public agenda of the topics related to gender equality (as	Weakness of the actual national mechanism of women (Commission of Transition) while we

violence), and at the same time, the need to work in the planning and the gender responsible budgets as part of the equality agenda.	approve the Law of Councils that will allow the creation of the Council of Gender Equality.
Trained, committed and motivated staff in the interior or the institutions, which has allow the development of strong technical proposals that sustain the modifications incorporated in the budgetary instruments.	Permanent need of training in the interior of the institutions due to the high rotation of the staff.
	Need of specific training and accompaniment for the sectorial ministries staff for the adequate application of the instruments.
Information generated using the budgetary classification and its availability online.	Little knowledge of the citizenship in relation to the information and use that can be made of it.

#### 4.- Challenges for the future.

Despite the important results achieved the experiences of the incorporation of the gender perspective in the process of planning and Budget of Ecuador also faces huge challenges that can be summed up in three words: **sustainability, deepening and accountability**.

The first challenge is the **sustainability** of the experience itself, because the incorporation of gender in the planning and budget is a long-term process by itself, that implies a huge amount of actors and in the Ecuadorian case, it is developed in highly changing environments. This requires a permanent generation and strengthening of the capacities and a constant influence that is still concentrated in a few hands. It is for this reason that the role of cooperation and external support is still fundamental to conduct the experience and to expand the institutional basis on where it is based. Cooperation also plays an important role in the generation of “informal” channels of coordination and articulation which are needed to strength this processes and which requires support until the definitive conformation of the Council of Gender Equality.

On the other hand, the **deepening** of the experience requires action in several fronts:

- Expanding the work to act in the **whole of the budgetary process**. Nowadays the process is focused mainly in the elaboration of the preform and the monitoring of the execution of the resources, but it is also important to strengthen the phase of operative planning (the moment in where the contents of the programs and the priorities of the resources in the different sectors are defined) and the later phase of evaluation

In the phase of **programming**, because as it could be seen from the parliamentary group for the rights of women itself and from the women organizations in the monitoring processes, the institutions are now assigning amounts that, don't correspond with the real priorities for gender equality, nor take into account the real “need”, resulting clearly insufficient. This implies, on the one hand, to strength the work of incorporation of gender in the sectorial agendas, identifying and including on them the priority topics for equality and women rights. On the other hand, to complete the work of strategic planning with the landing in the

operative planning, through the elaboration of programs and projects of investment that respond to the concrete and well-dimensioned problems and where the cost of its realization has been accounted.

In the case of the **evaluation** it is not only a financial evaluation, but also a result evaluation. That means that it is important to establish instruments and methodologies to help us to measure how the programs and projects and their correspondent assignation of resources have made a difference in the life of people, and particularly in the case of the gender responsible budgets, how these resources contributed to reduce gaps of equality and to achieve the fulfillment of women rights. In words of one of the actors of the process: *“Achieve public finances in which we can measure how the “money” is used”*<sup>27</sup>.

➤ Expanding the influence of the work **“up and down”**.

“Up” so the work in the gender responsible budgets connects with other fields of the macroeconomic politics (for instance, the formulation of the macro fiscal charts or the national accounting), through the Central Bank or the National Institute of Statistics.

And “down”, because it is important that these transformations that we achieve in the budgetary cycle are also moved to the sub national level. Now, the regulations about how the instruments of planning and budget achieved in the national field have to be applied in a decentralized level are still in construction. For instance, local governments are now not using the classification for expenditure orientation. This deconcentration of the process requires to think in replication strategies involving other actors, such as permanent commissions of gender that must be mandatory established as part of the Local Council in each local governments<sup>28</sup>, local universities or the Institute of National Higher Studies (IAEN) as a post-graduate university of the State, that permit to expand the possibilities of generation of capacities of other public institutions and to transfer knowledge to a higher number of actors.

The third main challenge has to be with the **promotion of the use of the generated information** and to improve **accounting**. As we have mentioned before, since 2012, the information generated by the classification is available online, but its existence is still unknown for both the institutions of the State and many social organizations. The management of this information will allow promoting the enforceability of the civil society, building its capacities for the dialogue with the State, and to the monitoring and fulfillment of the commitments. So, an important work of broadcasting and capacities generation among the citizenship – particularly in women organizations- and among the monitoring entities of the State (such as the Bureau or the Assembly) to properly understand this information and to promote a greater use of it.

## 5.- Sustainability:

Many of the strengths of the Ecuadorian process are also its best actives to achieve its sustainability. The **regulatory framework** that regulates it makes it not only a “matter of will” but a mandate. Besides, the range of the regulation (Constitution and Code of Finances) is the best of possible, which makes difficult its modification.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview to Soraya Arévalo.

<sup>28</sup> So it is established in the Organic Code of Territorial Administration (COTAD) approved in 2010.

Other of the most important elements of sustainability is the **institutionalization** achieved by the process. On the one hand, the inclusion of the incorporation of the equality perspective in the budget within the rules of the MF as one of its competences, and the existence of the Division of Fiscal Equality as part of its schedule, now makes this process a responsibility for this institution and establishes the basis to continue its impulse and strengthening. On the other hand, the fact that many of the achievements reached are based on the instruments that usually regulates the running of the budgetary cycle (as the guidelines and the classification) permit them to continue to be used as part of natural daily routine of the institutions.

At the same time the process of capacity building developed within the institutions like the MF has generated **appropriation and commitment**. The results obtained are lived as collective, as their own, and above all, its rationality is understood. Instruments like the classification are now seen as “facilitator” of a work that had to equally be done and now it is much easy to make it.

With this favorable context, the unit of fiscal equality of the MF now counts with a work team and own budget. This allow us to continue working in the reinforcement of the capacities of the sectorial ministries in the use of the classification of expenditure orientation for gender equality policies and leading to the MF itself the actions needed to fulfill the institutional mandate of incorporating the equality perspective in the budget, established on its own regulation.

Eventually, the importance of influence from the gender perspective in the planning and budget is already part of the work agendas of the defenders of gender equality and women rights in the country. In spite of the transformations undergone by the women governmental mechanisms and the political weakness these agendas have suffered, the initial conviction thanks to which this experience started has remain present and is now reflected within the **“Plan of equality, non-discrimination and Good Living for Ecuadorian women 2010–2014”**<sup>29</sup>. Now, women organizations are working in basis of a consensual agenda with the State establishing priority axis like political participation or violence. Thanks to the processes of social monitoring made by the organizations to the National Plan of Violence, the work in gender responsible budgets is included as part of their strategies of influence. So, while the fight for the resources for gender equality were important to those who are fighting for this cause, the influence and enforceability would still continue to be a sustainability factor of the experience.

## 6. Lessons learnt and potentially replicable

The Ecuadorian experience has generated numerous practical instruments, as the **budgetary guidelines, the functional catalogue or the gender budgetary classification**, which are also well documented and count with manual about how to be used. The development and application of these instruments are highly replicable in any experience promoted from the State and providing the existence of the alliance and implication of the governing institution in the budgetary process (as the case of the Ministry of Finances).

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<sup>29</sup> The “Plan of equality, non-discrimination and Good Living for Ecuadorian women 2010 – 2014, within the strategic line referred to the “Model of transversal management for the mobilization of State agencies in favor of the achievement of the objectives of Equality, Non-Discrimination and Good Living for Women” includes, among other topics, “the Improvement and application of the analysis tool of the General State Budget, the integration of the women rights perspective and gender equality in the Decentralized National System of Participative Planning, in the General State Budget and the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the public policies and the incorporation of gender in other fields of the fiscal policy (impact income-taxation)”<sup>29</sup>. This makes the incorporation of gender in the budgetary process part of the national equality agenda.



When carrying out this kind of experience in other places, it is important to take into account some **lessons learnt** during the process:

- ✓ At the beginning of the Ecuadorian process, it was fundamental to count with an inter-institutional mechanism of cooperation (the Agreement) which permitted us to avoid the high mobility of authorities<sup>30</sup> and to advance in the planned actions. It is important that the experiences of influence from the gender perspective in the public budget leave from inter-institutional consensus and agreement that permit to avoid the changes of authorities and transcend political times, counting with the mechanism to give continuation to the process from the beginning.
- ✓ On the other hand, it is also fundamental to generate continuous process of awareness in both the technical and political staff, particularly in the ministries that governs the planning and budget processes, because without this it is complex to start the work in the interior of the institutions.
- ✓ Besides, the involvement of the middle-ranking and operative staff of these institutions involves working in a sustainable way for the capacity building.
- ✓ The Ecuadorian experience show us that in these processes it is important to show not only how to do it, but most important, which is the meaning of doing it.
- ✓ As a complement to the training, to achieve the commitment and appropriation of the technical staff it is fundamental the generation of incentives to reward the effort of the public staff involved and the establishment of participation spaces and the elaboration of proposals together with gender and planning and finances specialists.
- ✓ The development of higher technical proposals makes necessary its argumentation according to the theoretical, methodological and regulatory framework of gender equality and human rights of the context. In other words, the proposal apart from being technically viable, have to respond to the objective of gender equality as it is designed in the country agendas. For example, in the Ecuadorian case, it was fundamental to count with an institutionalized policy framework (first the Plan for Equal Opportunities and then the Plan of Equality, Non-Discrimination and Good Living for Ecuadorian Women) which is in the basis of the conceptualization of the budgetary catalogues and classifications and which marks towards the resources may be prioritize.
- ✓ In addition, the application of these proposals is consolidated when they are developed as part of the regular instruments of planning and budget. For example, in Ecuador the gender budgetary classification is part of the system of national financial management and its use is regulated in the Budgetary Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Finances.
- ✓ In this respect, and given that many of the systems involved in public finances are already “packed”, another learning is the need to be allied with the IT and technical staff of the institutions to analyze the feasibility of making the required changes to incorporate the gender perspective.
- ✓ Other fundamental learning generated from the Ecuadorian experience is that the continuation of the work in the interior of the institutions (as the case of the MF) permits to identify on a daily basis the favorable situations and new opportunities, against which new alternatives can appear to allow us to achieve, in a creative way, positive results and

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<sup>30</sup> During the first phase of the experience (between September 2005 and July 2007), previous to the creation of the Gender Unit of the MF, eight changes of Ministries of State in the Council of Economy and its correspondent work teams were changed. This situation demanded an intense and almost permanent work of lobby by the authorities of the CONAMU and the UNIFEM for the reposition of the commitments of the Agreement on each designation (Armas, 2009).

consolidate the advances. For instance, in this experience, the institutionalization of the Division of Fiscal Equality was eventually possible in a context of institutional change in which a new schedule in the MF was planned and where we took advantage of the existence of an area that had already been working and had gained recognition.

- ✓ To face the challenge of sustaining the political will of the higher authorities, the Ecuadorian experience shows us that it is fundamental to evidence, record and broadcast the obtained results, also showing how they help to make easier the decision making and to improve public management.
- ✓ Other learning of this experience is that, once the different proposals are initiated it is fundamental to analyze the use we are making of them, to give them feedback and to improve them permanently. In Ecuador, for instance, the evaluation of the use of the gender classification in the functional catalogue gave light to design the later Classification of Expenditure Orientation in Gender Equality Policies.
- ✓ It is also fundamental to promote its broadcast and use by a vast group of actors, including members of the Assembly, governmental mechanisms for women or women organizations. These last have a fundamental role in the social enforceability, vigilance and control, in which the management of the budgetary information is a key issue.
- ✓ Other of the lessons is the need to maintain spaces for inter-institutional coordination and dialogue. Given that the budget has diverse moments in the governmental structure, it is important a joint and well-articulated work between the different institutions in charge of its government, planning and the governmental mechanisms of women (the MF, the SENPLADES and the Commission of Transition in the Ecuadorian case) together with the sectorial institutions (inspection entity) and the National Assembly (responsible for the approval and also the inspection).
- ✓ Eventually, other learning of the Ecuadorian experience was the fundamental role the strategic and sustainable alliances played with organizations such as the UN WOMEN and the GIZ. Thanks to them, it was possible to maintain a long-term process beyond institutional changes. In addition, the actors of this experience have remarked how both international institutions are able to ally with national priorities and add efforts through technical assistance from its own strengths but always focused in the achievement of the country agendas.
- ✓ International organizations also have an important role to promote regional and worldwide exchanges and to promote South-South learning. In the Ecuadorian case this has been one of the key elements to generate both the proposals and strategies of influence in the budgetary process, and to share the achievements and generate incentives and recognition to the people and institutions that were involved in them.

## **7.- Recommendations.**

The fiscal policy and public budgets are never neutral to gender. Behind the way they are collected and resources are assigned there are people affected. In particular, men and women suffer this impact in a different way for the budgetary decisions, and therefore, these decisions cannot be taken ignoring these differences. The States have assumed both in international level and the national regulations itself, specific commitments to advance towards greater gender equality. These commitments remain a paper tiger when there are not resources to make them viable.

So, the States must revise and re-think the way public budgets are formulated, executed and evaluated. The Ecuadorian experience allows us to extract some recommendations about how to put this in practice, which can be summed up in the following:

- ❖ To incorporate the principle of the budgeting with gender perspective as part of the regulation related to these processes.
- ❖ To generate and strengthen the appropriate institutionalization to carry them out. On the one hand, to strengthen the governmental mechanisms of women to coordinate and accompany these processes. On the other hand, to generate these spaces to the interior of the different institutions involved in the budgetary formulation (Finances, Planning, sectorial Ministries), given them the political support, operative capacity and power to decide and spaces to articulate and coordinate them. articulation and coordination
- ❖ The management from the executive must be complemented with the other actors of the State (As the Assembly or the Bureau), also responsible for other faces of the budgetary cycle, generating synergies among the different actors.
- ❖ To develop specific instruments inserted within the budgetary process of each place and to establish permanent mechanisms of capacity building for its appropriate application.
- ❖ To articulate the use of these budgetary instruments with the implementation of the national strategies for gender equality, incorporating the priorities established on them as part of the content of the instruments and complementing the exercise of budgeting with identification and accounting of the real needs to carry them out.
- ❖ To establish strategies for its applicability in the decentralized government and the processes of deconcentration of services.
- ❖ To promote the generation of disaggregated budgetary information as an instrument to achieve a greater public management and transparency and to favor its use to improve the consolidation of the accountability.
- ❖ To generate mechanisms to permit the evaluation beyond the budgetary assignments, the quality and impact of the programs and policies, as well as their contribution to the elimination of the inequities.
- ❖ To involve women organizations, establishing spaces for participation and dialogue and to make easier their role of citizenship vigilance and social control.

## **8.- Final recognitions.**

The present case study has been possible thanks to the information and the contributions made by:<sup>31</sup>

- ☺ Maria Dolores Almeida, independent consultant, Former Minister of Finances and former responsible of the Program of Modernization and Decentralization of the GIZ.
- ☺ Soraya Arévalo, Director of the Division of Fiscal Equality of the MF.
- ☺ Lorena Barba, Program Specialist and Coordinator of the Program of Gender Responsible Budgets of UN WOMEN, Ecuador.
- ☺ Liliana Durán, President of the Permanent National Forum for Ecuadorian Women.
- ☺ Patricia Galvez, Director of CEDEAL.
- ☺ Alexandra Ocles, President of the Commission of Transition for the Definition of the Public Institutionalization to Guarantee Equality between Men and Women.

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<sup>31</sup> Appearance in alphabetical order.

- ☺ Maria Paula Romo, President of the Parliamentary Group for the Rights of Women of the National Assembly.
- ☺ Cayetala Salao, Advisor of the Division of Public Policies of the SENPLADES.
- ☺ Ximena Troya, Project Responsible of the Youth Christian Association (ACJ)

The study was also made from the existent systematizations about the Ecuadorian experience, available in the following documents:

- Almeida, Maria Dolores (2013): *Incorporación del Enfoque De Género en el Presupuesto Nacional del Ecuador: Sistematización de la Experiencia*. (Incorporation of the Gender Perspective in the National Budget of Ecuador: Systemizations of the Experience): UN WOMEN
- Armas, Amparo (2009): *“Proceso de incorporación de género en el Presupuesto General del Estado: Experiencia ecuatoriana”* (Process of gender incorporation in the General State Budget: Ecuadorian experience). Workbook Nº 8 of the series *En la Economía Contamos Todas y Todos* (In Economy Every Men and Women Counts): UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) – Office of the Andean Region. Quito, Ecuador.
- Palacios, Ximena (2012): *Sistematización de experiencias: Veedurías y Proceso de Control Social de Organizaciones de Mujeres y Jóvenes al Plan nacional de Erradicación de la Violencia de Género* (Systematization of experiences: Monitoring and Social Control Process of Women and Youth Organizations to the National Plan of Eradication of Gender Violence) -PNEVG-. UN WOMEN and UNFPA
- UN WOMEN (2012): *Sistematización de la Experiencia “Veedurías y Procesos de Control Social de Organizaciones de Mujeres a nivel local”* (Systematization of the experiences “Monitoring and Social Control Process of Women Organizations at local level”).

## 9. Acronyms list

ACRONYM	DESCRIPTION
CEDEAL	Centro Ecuatoriano de Desarrollo y Estudios Alternativos <i>Ecuadorian Centre for Development and Alternative Studies</i>
CONAMU	Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres <i>National Council for Women</i>
FMI	Fondo Monetario Internacional <i>International Monetary Fund</i>
IAEN	Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales <i>Institute of National Higher Studies</i>
MF	Ministerio de Finanzas <i>Ministry of Finances</i>
SENPLADES	Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo <i>National Secretary of Planning and Development</i>
SNIP	Sistema de Inversión Pública <i>Public Investment System</i>
GIZ	Agencia alemana para la Cooperación Internacional (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). <i>German Agency for International Cooperation</i>
GTZ	Agencia Cooperación Técnica Alemana <i>German Agency for Technical Cooperation</i>

UN WOMEN	Entidad de las Naciones Unidas para la Igualdad de Género y el Empoderamiento de las Mujeres <i>UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</i>
PNBV	Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir <i>National Plan for the Good Living</i>
PNEVG	Plan Nacional de Erradicación de la Violencia de Género <i>National Plan for the Eradication of Gender Violence</i>
UNFPA	Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas <i>Population Fund of the United Nations</i>
UNIFEM	Fondo de Desarrollo de las Naciones Unidas para la Mujer <i>UN Development Fund for Women</i>