

Executive Summary

This report presents the main evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Country Portfolio Evaluation of the UN Women Ecuador Office conducted between June and December 2022. This type of exercise is a systematic assessment of the normative, coordination and operational aspects of UN Women's contribution to development results relating to gender equality and women's empowerment at the country level.

Purpose, objectives, and scope






The general purpose of the evaluation was to support both accountability and learning dimensions, while assuming a formative nature to contribute to the preparation of UN Women Ecuador's next Strategic Note. Within this framework, the evaluation promoted an evidence-based, collaborative and participatory process. The exercise included all activities within the triple mandate of the organization across both global and national programmatic activities implemented in the country, as well as normative and coordination activities. Programmatic work considered the thematic areas established in the Strategic Plan of UN Women for the 2018-2022 period, and included geographic areas identified in the Strategic Note and projects.

Gender equality and women's rights in Ecuador

- Most densely populated country of South America; population of 17.5 million of which 51% are women and 49% are men with 64% living in urban areas and 36% in rural areas.
- Indigenous population comprises 14 nationalities and 18 peoples: 73.6% of women consider themselves mestizo; 7.09% indigenous; 7.02% self-identify as Afro-Ecuadorian/mulatto; and 6.8% Montubio. 471,205 people are registered with disabilities of which 48% were women.
- Middle-income country based on the model of production and export of primary goods, especially oil and agricultural products.
- Poverty at the national level was 27.7% as of December 2021, and extreme poverty 10.5%; poverty in rural areas was 20 percentage points higher than urban at 42.4%, and extreme poverty reached 20.3% in rural areas.
- Women work an average of 18 hours more weekly than men and triple the number of hours dedicated to unpaid work (32 hours vs. 9). Women perform 72% of housework and care duties.
- In 2021, 6 out of 10 women were found to have suffered some form of violence (sexual, psychological, patrimonial, physical, etc.). Psychological violence is the most recurrent type, with a 54% prevalence, and 25% of women reported having suffered sexual violence
- Regarding people on the move, there were 1.38 million entries and 1.47 million exits of Ecuadorian and foreign people at its various control points in 2021. Women and girls in situations of human mobility are more vulnerable and are exposed to different forms of violence, constituting the target of trafficking networks, especially if they move alone or in precarious conditions.
- Women are vulnerable to the impact of climate change given their lower income levels, higher dependence on natural resources (greater concentration of women in agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing), and array of social, economic and political barriers that limit their empowerment.

Sources: National Statistics and Census Institute of Ecuador (2021); World Bank (2020); World Health Organization (2017); Carcedo (2020); UN Women (2019).

Methodology and approach










Methodology		Evaluation criteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed methods to collect qualitative and quantitative data Focused on stakeholder use Gender-responsive and participatory approach to the evaluation 		Application of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) evaluation criteria, with human rights and gender equality as an additional cross-cutting criterion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevance Effectiveness Efficiency Coherence Sustainability Gender and human rights 	
<p>45 people consulted through interviews and focus groups</p> <p>69%  31% </p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with 38 UN Women personnel and partners; 5 focus group discussions conducted with stakeholders</p>	<p>170+ documents analysed</p>  <p>Desk review of strategic, operational, financial, and programmatic documentation analysis</p>	<p>Survey of 43 UN Women and partners</p>  <p>Survey UN Women Ecuador Office personnel and key stakeholders</p>	<p>Stories of change and testimonials</p>  <p>5 stories of change of indigenous women and youth in selected rural regions where UN Women worked</p>

UN Women in Ecuador

The 2019-2022 Strategic Note is the primary multi-year planning tool for UN Women in Ecuador. It is aligned with: the global UN Women Strategic Plans 2018-2021 and 2022-2025; the 2019-2022 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework of Ecuador; and the National Development Plan 2017-2021 and the Creating Opportunities Plan 2022-2025. Its general objective is to achieve gender equality in Ecuador and empower women and girls by guaranteeing the enjoyment of their human rights.

 <p>Overall programme objective Achieve gender equality in Ecuador and empower women and girls by incorporating the enjoyment of their human rights</p>	 <p>Budget and human resources The Country Office had a US\$ 14.5 million budget and team of 31 professionals</p>
 <p>Strategic Note 2019-2022 impact areas UN Women's strategy in Ecuador over 2019-2022 included two impact areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence 	

Key results

 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to the modification of norms, institutional design and implementation of public policies in accordance with international conventions and instruments on women's rights: ratification and implementation of agreement 190 with the International Labor Organization and the implementation of the Law for the Eradication of Violence against Women 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong coordination to facilitate coherent work with a gender focus on various issues, both through leadership of the Interagency Gender Group of the United Nations System in Ecuador, as well as the Technical Secretariat of the International Cooperation Roundtable for Gender (MEGECI). 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreaming of the gender approach in interventions developed jointly with various United Nations agencies such as Pro-Amazonía, Safe Cities and the Spotlight Initiative, strengthening their territorial presence.
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to improving the livelihoods and economic empowerment of women by promoting income-generating initiatives, building leadership, and empowerment through capacity-building work with the Antisuyu Warmikuna School of the Pro-Amazonía Programme. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of national and subnational public institutions through technical assistance in the development of protocols, standards, and tools to prevent violence against women and girls. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binational, cross-border, and interagency coordination to strengthen local mechanisms for the protection of women and girls against various forms of violence.
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion and contribution to the design of the National Violet Economy Strategy; promotion and accompaniment of emergency social protection strategies through cash transfers; labor protection and promotion of women's employability, including protection networks and emergency funds for small businesses led by women. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative inclusion of adaptation and mitigation of climate change, environmental conservation, and promotion of resilience within the framework of the Pro-Amazonía Programme, promoting greater territorial presence and alliances with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition, for the benefit of the women from rural and indigenous communities and strengthening the productive diversification of their initiatives. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to the design and support of the National Agricultural Strategy for Rural Women of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

Innovations

- Adaptation of training programmes to an **online and self-administered methodology** in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and confinement measures. This also constituted a means to address frequent turnover of public administration officials, who constitute a target population of UN Women Ecuador's capacity-building actions.
- UN Women's work in **sustainable development and climate change** was considered an emerging area, which secured funding to elevate the area to a strategic pillar. This opened a spectrum of opportunities to adapt the programmatic portfolio to a changing context and promote further resource mobilization.
- The Spotlight Initiative explicitly incorporated an **intersectional approach** into its design transversally and/or through a specific section that includes a matrix disaggregated by a group at risk, as well as the challenges and programmatic approach for their inclusion.
- In supporting the National Competitiveness Policy of the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investment and Fisheries of Ecuador, UN Women adopted a set of **innovative management strategies**, including among other innovative components: the identification of "champions" at the highest level; ensuring coherence with government's political priorities; and a proposal built in the form of product packages to facilitate decision-making.

CONCLUSION 1

UN Women Ecuador demonstrated alignment with the norms and instruments for the protection of human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, as well as with national development strategies. Furthermore, UN Women was recognized for its leadership in installing issues in the national gender agenda and its specialization concerning the normative frameworks of women's rights. Nevertheless, the systematic integration of 'leave no one behind' and disability approaches continues to be necessary for a greater focus on priority groups.

UN Women Ecuador has shown a marked alignment with the norms and instruments for the protection of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as with national strategies. Its strong technical capacity is recognized as an added value of the work of UN Women, which has allowed it to position itself as a legitimate actor to provide technical assistance and partners with others working to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women in Ecuador. UN Women fully aligns its work with the principles of the regulatory framework and the women's rights agenda, as well as its leadership in installing issues related to both approaches in the national gender agenda and specialized technical expertise. Although the design of the Strategic Note identifies structural causes of gender inequality, there is an opportunity to deepen the design of strategies to address such causes, as well as strategies that allow to track transformations associated with its results. This long-term effort reaches beyond the implementation of this multi-year Strategic Note. In addition, the 'leave no one behind' and disability approaches are not systematically included in the design of interventions in the territories framed in the programmatic-operational component of the mandate.

RECOMMENDATION 1



Strengthen the definition and participation of priority groups of rights holders through the design of specific interventions and targeted actions of the portfolio, in particular: women and youth from rural environments; indigenous and Afro-descendant women; women living with disabilities; women in a situation of human mobility; and people from the LGBTQI+ collective.

CONCLUSION 2

UN Women Ecuador has been effective in producing changes in the short term, contributing to the elimination of violence against women and girls and showing notable achievements at the level of work in the economic empowerment of women, even in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Women has known how to rely on its strengths and drivers, applying effective capacity-building strategies, political advocacy, and evidence generation. In this sense, there is an opportunity to reinforce the territorial programmatic implementation approach with a view towards sustained impact.

The work of UN Women Ecuador is widely recognized by various actors for its contributions through the three components of its mandate. Although the normative component was seen as its most significant contribution, there is a growing recognition and appreciation of its contribution of the programmatic component of the mandate, especially from work at the territorial level. In this sense, the contribution of UN Women has been highlighted in supporting the economic autonomy of women, where contextual factors have played a prominent role, especially in terms of the deterioration of income and social protection of women. The design of the Strategic Note succeeded in identifying the priorities for closing gaps in fulfilling women's rights in the determined areas of impact. The changes in the national and global scenario also brought emerging priorities in food security and the care economy to the forefront, in addition to consolidating the current areas of impact, and validated in their importance and relevance. It would be opportune to consider a strategic approach to its 'territorial model' to reduce the adverse effects of limited project timeframes (12-36 months) and link priorities of the Strategic Note without dispersing efforts and resources.

RECOMMENDATION 2



Adopt a strategic focus to its overall work and territorial expansion to frame the priorities of the Strategic Note in the country without dispersing efforts and resources, while reinforcing emerging components and themes in terms of their importance and scope.

CONCLUSION 3

UN Women in Ecuador was efficient in the financial execution of its portfolio, as well as innovative in mobilizing funds and diversifying the donor portfolio, especially through the inclusion of climate change adaptation. However, the mobilization and securing of resources in the medium and long term continues to be a challenge in which the context and work with a territorial intervention approach in such a diverse country play a crucial role. A more adapted and efficient results-based management would contribute to the improvement of the work of the Country Office.

UN Women's challenges for the following Strategic Note are linked with how the organizational structure and internal processes can make the most of their opportunities through sustained work on their strengths and improvement of their areas of weakness. Some of these areas that need to be strengthened are first, the planning and monitoring process of the interventions, which lacked a technological system that allows implementing partners and right holders to know and update in real-time the progress of the intervention. Secondly, although UN Women in Ecuador has been working in advocacy for women's rights, communication actions need to work at a strategic level, to amplify the scope and voices, to be linked to the advocacy process at the highest level, and with the other two components of UN Women's mandate. Third, territorial level projects require a well-established structure and management in the field to facilitate the sustainability of the results, attract new donors, ensure the well-being of right holders, the consultants and the implementation partners, as well as secure timely implementation of interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 3



Strategically promote resource mobilization to establish the basis for long-term programming and to reinforce the mechanisms and processes for managing Country Office personnel, including staff, external consultants, in addition to implementing partners.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Improve the mechanisms, practices, and processes for planning, communication, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions.

CONCLUSION 4

UN Women's programme in Ecuador partially strengthened the capacities of strategic partners of the State, which was limited by external factors such as the high turnover of officials and experts. In contrast, the ownership of results has been concentrated more in larger cities than in peri-urban and rural areas. Moreover, although civil society networks and organizations managed to strengthen some capacities, they experienced substantial challenges related to contextual changes, which undermined their strength and affected the prospects for sustainability of the results of territorial interventions.

In a middle-income country like Ecuador, greater sustainability is related – among other factors – with the mobilization of funds from international cooperation and the strengthening of the capacities of public institutions, the fabric of partnerships, and the women themselves, girls, and young rights holders. There is space to encourage closer work with civil society organizations and the women's and the feminist movement, in addition to the implementing partners. The work with the National Council for Gender Equality (CNIG), the recently created Ministry of Women and Human Rights, and the sustained strengthening of the management and implementation of the Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women (LOIPEVCM) by the public institutions that make up the Comprehensive National System to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women, are particularly noteworthy. The continuation and reinforcement of strategic alliances with the State and the private sector can also open important doors for technical assistance, a comparative advantage widely highlighted in this evaluation. A more articulated approach to exit strategies with implementing partners will also be a way to strengthen their position as a driver of capacity development in the medium and long term.

RECOMMENDATION 5



Deepen capacity building, both internally and with strategic partners and implementers.

CONCLUSION 5

UN Women has demonstrated internal coherence as well as synergies with the work of other United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes in the country. This was grounded in the assessment of joint programme implementation and their contribution to mainstreaming of the gender lens in the United Nations System in Ecuador. The commitment to work on climate change adaptation also opens new prospects to work with other agencies and enhance the impact of interventions, as is the case with work on migration, protection, and humanitarian aid.

Internally, the design of the Strategic Note was coherent in terms of the relationship between its areas of impact, outcomes, and products. It was aligned with the Strategic Plan, the regulatory framework, and the women's rights agendas. There was also widespread appreciation of the coordination work carried out by the Office beyond the United Nations System, incorporating the work as the International Cooperation Roundtable for Gender in Ecuador (MEGECI) Technical Secretariat and the work in coordination with civil society as a strength. At the same time, there is still room to advance in the deepening of synergies between the initiatives of the agencies of the United Nations System in Ecuador, promoting a coordinated and coherent response from a strategic point of view and in line with the spirit of the Reform of United Nations. UN Women can contribute to a large extent to consolidate this joint work through the complementarity of approaches, mandates, and the ability to respond to growing demand, seeking to overcome resource limitations with the strategic combination of these. The programmatic portfolio of UN Women has incorporated into its interventions the work with priority groups of women and girls, and there is a wide margin to advance with other groups of rightsholders that are not sufficiently integrated.

RECOMMENDATION 6



Consolidate and expand association with current strategic partners and implementers, and consider diversifying towards new partners, mainly in the normative and coordination components of UN Women's mandate, while working to support the mainstreaming the gender approach within other agencies of the United Nations System.