

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

**PROJECT RLA/03/52M/UKM
POLICIES FOR ERADICATION OF POVERTY,
EMPLOYMENT GENERATION AND PROMOTION OF
EQUALITY OF GENDER AND RACE IN THE INFORMAL
ECONOMIC SECTOR IN LATIN AMERICA :
ECUADOR AND BRASIL**

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT: ECUADOR

August 2006

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Abbreviations

CEOLS	Confederación Ecuatoriana de Organizaciones Sindicales Libres (Ecuadorian Confederation of Free Labour Organisations)
CODENPE	Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador (Council for the Development of the Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador)
CONAMU	Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres (National Women's Council)
CNT	Consejo Nacional de Trabajo (National Labour Council)
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FUT	Frente Unitario de Trabajadores (Single Workers Front)
GRPE	Project of "Policies for Eradicating Poverty, Creating Employment and Fostering Gender Equality in the Informal Sector in Latin America"
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MTE	Ministerio de Trabajo y Empleo (Ministry of Labour and Employment)
OSRA	Sub-regional Office for the Andean Countries
PIE	Plan Inmediato de Empleo (Immediate Employment Plan)
PIO	Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades (Equal Opportunity Plan)
SENPLADES	Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (National Secretariat for Planning and Development)
SENRES	Secretaría Nacional de Remuneraciones y Escalafón del Sector Público (National Secretariat for Remuneration and Ranking in the Public Sector)
STFS	Secretaría Técnica del Frente Social (Social Front Technical Secretariat)

Executive Summary

This report contains the results of the final evaluation of the Project of “Policies for Eradicating Poverty, Creating Employment and Fostering Gender Equality in the Informal Sector in Latin America,” which was done in Ecuador between 2003 and 2006.

Much of the project time frame was marked by serious social and political instability in the country, which forced the elected president to step down in 2002. The national Congress named Dr. Alfredo Palacio to replace him.

This was accompanied by structural weakness in the design and implementation of public policy for eradicating poverty and creating employment, which could not be overcome even within a framework of relative economic stability stemming from an unusual increase in the price of petroleum, the country's main export. Instead of focusing on creating decent work, the Ecuadorian government placed priority on continuing welfare-style social policies with little long-range impact on human development and social well-being.

While it is important to acknowledge that both the country's crisis and the lack of clarity in public policy on poverty and employment are factors that affected implementation of the project, there were also several design-related aspects that made it difficult to achieve the planned outcomes and objectives.

The project's main objective, “to help reduce poverty and the shortage of decent jobs in the informal economy by strengthening the areas of gender and race/ethnicity in strategies, policies and programmes for eradicating poverty and creating employment,” was excessive in light of events taking place in the country while the project was under way. One indispensable condition for mitigating poverty and the shortage of decent work, besides a climate of social and economic policies favourable to the project's goals, is the interest and willingness of public and private stakeholders and trade unions to take action to modify patterns of labour exclusion and discrimination, which especially affect women.

While all stakeholders committed to the project value and acknowledge the importance of a gender approach to public policy on employment and poverty, the urgent pressures of current events at times led them to give the gender issue less priority on their agendas. For example, the possibility of the trade union movement taking a more proactive stance on gender has been limited not only by the movement's organisational characteristics, but also by the priority placed on defending labour rights that are being violated by the deregulation of labour. In the government sector, an active commitment to foster gender equity has been limited by constant turnover of authorities, which makes it difficult to solidify the government's weak institutional capacities.

Various situations that arose in the country made it difficult for the project to have an impact on the informal economy or the development of a race/ethnicity approach. Its work focused on fostering a gender approach to national employment policies and programmes.

The project, which ran from June 2003 to June 2006, consisted of two phases, which were managed in different ways:

1. **Preparation and organisation phase**, which ran from the project start date to January 2005. Besides hiring project personnel, initial steps were taken to establish institutional partnerships and preliminary work was done in the content and scope of the intervention. During this period, the project had a full-time consultant in Quito, as well as coordination from Lima.
2. **Finalising of agreements and project implementation phase**, from February 2005 to June 2006. This was a period of intensive work during which the activities that led to the project's outcomes and effects were implemented. The Lima-based project coordinator had overall responsibility for management during these 16 months.

The project focused mainly on fostering institutional coordination, reinforcing the Ministry of Labour and Employment (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Empleo*, MTE) to enable it to address gender issues, and carrying out various training and awareness-raising activities with tangible results. Noteworthy outcomes include the establishment of a technical body within the MTE, the Gender and Youth Unit, which will be responsible for ensuring the formulation and implementation of inclusive employment policies that foster women's labour rights. Another significant outcome is the increased strength and dynamism of the social dialogue groups in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca, which are making it possible to move toward national policies that respond to local situations. Another relevant contribution of the project is training for trainers, who will be able to pass on the skills and knowledge they have acquired.

Although the project's scope and objectives seem ambitious in light of the social and political context, the implementation of the activities and strategies facilitated a significant process of coordination and dialogue in Ecuador regarding the importance of including a gender dimension in the formulation and implementation of public policy. This brought together organisations that previously had little contact with one another.

These advances were possible thanks to the impetus provided by a relevant, appropriate strategy aimed at optimising and enhancing processes that were already under way and were somewhat mature. Instead of starting from scratch, the project capitalised on the experience gained through other initiatives that were also striving to correct the asymmetries affecting women in the area of employment and labour.

After three years, the various project stakeholders have reaffirmed their willingness to participate in a new phase to consolidate and reinforce the outcomes achieved. The evaluation therefore includes a series of conclusions and recommendations that can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of future outcomes.

It is important to affirm a rights-based approach as the conceptual foundation for a new project, which will also include the development of integral, multi-agency responses such as those addressing issues of work and equality. To ensure that the new project is rooted in broader political frameworks, it should identify a national programme or policy currently in effect that can serve as a framework and a support during the project's implementation. It would be helpful to analyse the possibility of framing the implementation of a new project within the Equal Opportunity Plan (*Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades*, PIO) that CONAMU has been carrying out since 1998 as a result of the Beijing accords.¹

In programmatic terms, a new project should focus on four complementary strategies:

¹ The PIO currently in effect was conceived with a time frame of 2004-2009.

- **Strategy for dissemination of information about labour rights** aimed at the broadest possible sectors of the population, to reinforce ownership of rights that the government and private sector must respect in a social context that has emphasised on the flexibilisation of labour with repercussions that have been particularly detrimental to women.
- **Strategy for training and awareness raising** aimed at developing and enhancing new skills, attitudes and practices among the ILO's three constituent parties. To implement this strategy, differentiated training processes are needed, taking into consideration the particular characteristics of the trade union movement, public agencies and the business sector.
- **Strategy for building and enhancing organisational capacities**, with special emphasis on the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the National Labour Council and the major labour organisations. This strategy should go into greater depth in building capacities for coordination and expand the trade unions' base of representation in light of changes in the labour market. Support is also needed to strengthen the organisational structures of men and women involved in the informal economy and other unstable forms of employment.
- **Strategy for awareness-raising and fostering political dialogue**, with particular relevance for dialogue groups and central labour organisations, to help expand democratic participation, especially among traditionally excluded social sectors.

Introduction

This report describes the findings of the final evaluation of the Project of “Policies for Elimination of Poverty, Job Creation and Fostering of Gender Equality in the Informal Sector in Latin America,” carried out in Ecuador between 2003 and 2006.

This evaluation serves a dual purpose. It represents an **independent analytical view** of the project’s performance and its contribution to poverty reduction and the lack of decent work in the informal economy through the strengthening of gender and racial/ethnicity approaches in strategies, policies and programmes designed and implemented by Ecuador. It also constitutes an **effort to identify lessons and learnings** that other agencies and national institutions can build on in the future as they implement processes for eradicating poverty, increasing decent work and fighting gender, racial and ethnic discrimination.

Methodologically, the evaluation involved three complementary, interrelated processes: (a) analysis and processing of secondary information, with emphasis on analysis of the project document, progress reports and materials prepared during the project period; (b) design of instruments for gathering and analysing primary source information, such as interview guides, and interviews with the main stakeholders involved in the project;² and (c) preparation of the report. Because of the short time available for the evaluation, the three processes were done simultaneously; as a result, interviews and the reading, analysis and processing of documents were still under way while the report was being drafted.

The project coordinator provided guidance in the identification of interview subjects from public agencies and the trade union movement. Besides providing documents (project document, reports, workshop minutes), the coordinator also shared impressions and views by phone and electronic mail.

The report consists of six parts. The first four parts describe the “history” of the project and the last two represent an effort to systematically document the successful strategies and the limitations identified in enhancing the gender dimension in public policies and programmes, providing input for reflection on future alternatives.

Finally, the appendices to this report include complementary statistical information about the country’s social and labour situation; they also detail the interviews carried out and include the instruments that served as the basis of these interviews.

In doing this evaluation, the greatest difficulty was the identification of informants who had participated in the entire project cycle. This resulted in segmented views in some cases and information gaps in others. Similarly, despite efforts made during the preparation of this report, it was impossible to gather the opinions of business sectors; as a result, gaining an understanding their views about the recently concluded phase, as well as their expectations and demands, remains a pending task.

It should also be noted that because it was impossible to gain access to budget information or reports about the project’s financial management, the only analysis of efficiency consists of qualitative observations. The content of this chapter, therefore, must be considered a general assessment.

² Annexes 1 and 2 of this document, respectively, include the list of people interviewed and the interview guides.

Finally, it is important to note that the criteria and opinions of a series of people who participated from various standpoints during the project's implementation have been extremely valuable in this evaluation. I would personally like to thank the people who were interviewed, the ILO staff in Peru, the IPEC staff in Ecuador, and especially María Bastidas, the project coordinator, for the time and effort they spent sharing their judgments and views during the evaluation.

The commitment to and understanding of the issue among the majority of interviewees reaffirms that fertile ground exists for the implementation of a new phase that will continue along this path.

Martha Moncada
Quito, August 2006

1. Recent background

Ecuador is one of the countries with the greatest inequalities in the region. Despite the economic growth the country has experienced in recent years, mainly as a result of high petroleum prices,³ these inequalities not only persist, but they also have deepened. Just over 10 years ago (1995), the poorest one-fifth of the population received 4.1 percent of the country's income; by 2004, that figure had dropped to 1.73 percent. Based on household purchasing power, poverty in 1999 was 1.6 times as severe as in 1995, with six of every 10 inhabitants unable to meet their basic needs. During the same period, there was an increase in the number of people who were not able to cover even their basic food needs (SIISE, Version 3.5).

Inequality and poverty are not reflected evenly in all sectors of the population. Women have not received equal treatment, nor has there been equal treatment of the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian population. According to census data, poverty in these latter groups is 89.9 percent and 70.3 percent, respectively, with a particularly severe impact on women living in rural areas. In that geographic region, nearly all indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women lack some basic need, a clear reflection of the serious gender and racial/ethnic discrimination in the country (see Annex 3).

Besides the poverty affecting women, there is discrimination in access to and control and use of the means of production and enjoyment of economic, social and rights, especially those related to labour. While the country has made no timely, systematic effort to gather information that reflects gender inequalities, ignoring the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and other international human rights instruments, the following figures offer an overview of the inequalities affecting this sector.

Employment information as of 2005 shows that although in that year there was an overall increase in employment (from 88.5 percent at the beginning of the year to 90.7 percent in December), this did not guarantee labour stability; instead, the types of jobs created showed a trend toward increased instability, reflected in the high unemployment rate at the end of the previous year (43.2 percent of the economically active population). Both underemployment and unemployment affect more women than men. In December underemployment was 13.38 percentage points higher for women than for men, while the unemployment rate among women held steady throughout the year at 15 percent, 7 points higher than the rate for men (ILDIS, 2005).

Of the women who have jobs, barely 31 percent are adequately employed, while that rate is 52 percent for men. "Slightly more than one-third of women (37 percent) work in the modern sector, compared to nearly half of men (47 percent). There is proportionally more employment of women than men in unstable jobs, considering their participation in the informal sector (37.7 percent) and the domestic service sector (10 percent)" (Larrea et al., 2006) (see Annex 4).

Official figures indicate that "average income for women is equivalent to 66 percent of men's income," and while 34 out of every 100 economically active women are not remunerated, that is true of only 17 out of every 100 men (MTE-CONAMU Agreement).

Discrimination against women because of their position in the production process is reflected in domestic labour (95 percent of the people working in that area are women)

³ Since 2000, in the wake of an unprecedented financial crisis, Ecuador has experienced GDP growth rates of more than 2.8 percent (Central Bank, 2006).

and the fact that women represent the largest group in the category of “unremunerated family worker” (60 percent). This contrasts with the fact that a scant 27 percent of all bosses are women. In this context, if a woman wants to work in “productive activities,” she must create her own job (see Annex 5).

The greater complexity that women face in finding some type of remunerated occupation reduces the family’s subsistence capacity because the woman can make little or no monetary contribution. The family’s living conditions are also affected by the social problems created by the subordination of women who lack economic independence.

To help modify employment conditions for women in the informal sector of the economy and help national institutions acquire the know-how and skills to develop a policy approach that takes gender, racial/ethnic dimensions into account in the formulation and implementation of policies for eradicating poverty and creating employment, the ILO, in response to requests from various Ecuadorian stakeholders, decided to support the project of “Policies of Poverty Eradication, Job Creation and Promotion of Gender Equality in the Informal Sector of Latin America” (GRPE).

This intervention, which was carried out from June 2003 to June 2006, consisted of two phases:

3. **Preparation and organisation phase**, which ran from the project start date to January 2005. During this phase, project staff was hired, institutional partnerships were established through the signing of agreements and the definition of mechanisms for coordination, and activities for introducing the project also began, with the preparation of informative materials.

This length of this phase was due to both the conflictive political and social scenario in the country, which is explained in the following section, and problems and difficulties in the structuring of the team responsible for project implementation in Ecuador.

4. **Agreements and implementation phase**, from February 2005 to June 2006. Once the problems mentioned above were resolved, and under new coordination, this 16-month phase involved intense efforts that made it possible to achieve many of the outcomes that resulted from the project. During this period, support was provided for various awareness-raising and training events and the formulation and definition of work plans, mainly in the government sector. Coordination was solidified with entities involved in implementation of the project through inter-institutional cooperation agreements, and mechanisms were established for dialogue and coordination on the issues of employment, labour and gender. During this phase, project planning and evaluation processes also got under way.

Because of the long start-up period, the time allotted for implementation of activities was significantly reduced. Despite the relatively short time available for the phase in which agreements were reached and activities were carried out, it is important to note that in addition to obtaining concrete, tangible outcomes, the project enabled the participating organisations to internalise the importance of taking action to modify patterns of exclusion and gender discrimination and including this approach in public policies and programmes related to employment.

To establish links between local problems and national public policy on labour and job creation, the GRPE project selected three local niches in which to act: Quito, Guayaquil

and Cuenca. Besides being focal points of problems related to employment and the informal economy, these three cities have an active women's movement and other citizen groups, which helped reinforce the social dialogue mechanisms that fed into the project.

2. Context analysis

The project's three-year time frame was a period of relative economic stability but serious social and political instability in Ecuador, characterised, among other things, by the elected president being forced out of office in 2002 after his credibility had been seriously undermined and the sectors that had supported his election had withdrawn their backing.

The social upheaval that followed the resignation of President Lucio Gutiérrez, from late 2004 to April 2005, affected the planning of project activities both because of the instability caused by the events and because of turnover among public officials.⁴

Events in the country affected dialogue not only with public officials, but also with the trade union movement and business associations. From late 2004 to mid-2005, the key item on the agenda for these sectors was the resolution of the political crisis. Their participation in the project's planned activities was secondary and had to be postponed until the situation was more stable.

Gutiérrez was succeeded by his vice president, Dr. Alfredo Palacio. Without a clearly defined position or the official backing of a political party and faced with a social scenario marked by scepticism about the use of power, the existing democratic order and the institutions that support it, President Palacio's actions have been marked by vacillation and a lack of clear direction. At times, such as during the recent events related to petroleum policy,⁵ social pressure has been the decisive factor in crucial executive branch decisions.

As a result of the isolation and fragility with which President Palacio took office, as well as the lack of even a basic labour programme, the social arena has been characterised by a pronounced weakness in promoting and implementing long-term policies aimed at driving sustainable development in the country. The government has basically continued the programmes that were already under way, most of which are unconnected efforts that respond to specific situations. They are not designed to reactivate the country's economy and productive apparatus and lack an approach appropriate for modifying the structural conditions in Ecuadorian society that have posed obstacles to addressing the fundamental rights of the population.

Among the examples of this are the obstacles in the implementation of the National Plan for Employment and Local Development Plan for 2001-2006. This plan, which was an effort to update the National Plan for 1996-2005,⁶ was designed to expand job

⁴ Around May 2005, for example, it was necessary to re-establish contacts and agreements with the MTE, because earlier coordination had been done with officials who were later replaced.

⁵ These include the termination of the contract with Occidental Petroleum (OXY) and reforms of the Hydrocarbon Law, which were meant to establish more equitable distribution of petroleum revenues between the government and petroleum companies as a result of the sharp increase in petroleum prices on the world market.

⁶ The National Plan for Social Development 1996-2005 contained a series of policies for creating productive employment that unfortunately were never implemented (Larrea et al., 2006).

opportunities for unemployed Ecuadorians and improve working conditions and income at the national and local levels through a series of policies, programmes and actions. While one of the plan's merits is that it takes an approach that respects specific situations and the diversity of the Ecuadorian population, it does not consider the National Women's Council (*Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres*, CONAMU) as one of the bodies that should play a role in management of employment policy. As a result, only 1.5 percent of total resources budgeted for implementation of the plan was earmarked for the goal of gender equity (Ibid.).

Because of the political instability that has affected the country, the plan was not implemented as expected; nevertheless, it remains a reference point for the implementation of an employment policy in Ecuador (Ibid.).

At the same time, the Social Front prepared a series of social policies for poverty reduction for the 2003-2007 time frame, with employment as a priority. Progress in social policy is related to the implementation of projects that are already "under way, that have an impact on the inclusion of the poor population in productive activities, such as the Emergency Social Investment Fund (*Fondo de Inversión Social de Emergencia*, FISE), the Development Project for Indigenous and Black Peoples of Ecuador (*Proyecto de Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas y Negros del Ecuador*, PRODEPINE), the Project for Poverty Reduction and Local Rural Development (*Proyecto de Reducción de la Pobreza y Desarrollo Rural Local*, PROLOCAL), the Integral Development Programme (*Programa de Desarrollo Integral*, PRODEIN), Productive Solidarity Loans (*Crédito Productivo Solidario*) and the Job Training Programme (*Programa de Capacitación Laboral*)" (Ibid.). The Social Front's initiative also takes into account certain programmes that were part of the National Employment Plan mentioned above, which have been implemented in an isolated manner with little connection.

The most relevant sector-based efforts in the area of employment in recent years have come from the Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Labour. In an effort to acknowledge the potential for creating and reinforcing employment opportunities for women in the tourism sector, CEPAL launched a project aimed at developing a gender approach in the Ministry of Tourism. Despite the efforts made, however, this has yet to crystallise.⁷

It is important to emphasise that the formulation and promotion of employment has been a marginal activity for the MTE in recent years. Instead of assuming its responsibility for the definition, implementation and coordination of labour and employment policies, the MTE has focused on issues related to regulating wages and handling labour conflicts (Larrea et al., 2006). Only since 2005, with the most recent administration, has the ministry made some changes in its role. Besides promoting the Immediate Employment Plan (*Plan Inmediato de Empleo*, PIE), the ministry has launched initiatives aimed at eliminating child labour, as well as legal and regulatory reforms in the areas for which it is responsible.

Despite its importance, the PIE lacked the necessary funding and was never even declared an official policy. The plan therefore did not become a priority for the public planning agency, SENPLADES, which after some negotiation finally agreed that the

⁷ The project promoted the establishment of a Dialogue Group on Tourism and Equality with the participation of public and private stakeholders. One outcome was an inter-agency agenda for making a gender approach part of labour and economic policy in the tourism sector. Achievement of the goals on this agenda has been fairly limited, unfortunately, and has mainly consisted of isolated events such as workshops, studies and technical assistance for a pilot project.

PIE should be fleshed out in projects. To date, according to information from the current Ministry of Labour, only two of the 18 projects have been approved.

As part of its mandate, CONAMU has implemented proposals and initiatives to foster equity in the labour market as part of the Equal Opportunity Plan for Ecuadorian Women 2005-2009 (*Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades de las Mujeres Ecuatorianas 2005-2009*, PIO). As a technical tool for gender policy management, PIO is designed to have an impact on the way the country's human, financial and technical resources are allocated in order to encourage decision making conducive to gender equity. To this end, PIO supports the development of specific agendas by women from various social sectors, age groups, ethnic groups and sexual options, with an emphasis on women living in poverty. This serves as the basis of the National Equity Pact for Women and Children, based on a commitment by civil society and the government to significantly reduce the equality gaps that affect the lives of people in these sectors (www.conamu.gov.ec).

Among the advances made by PIO, it is important to highlight the agreements with international cooperation agencies for technical assistance in the formulation of labour policy; the signing of the inter-agency agreement with the MTE and the joint definition of an operating plan; the implementation of the Programme of Support for Rural Women (*Programa de Apoyo a las Mujeres Rurales*, PADEMUR), the goal of which is the creation and reinforcement of local organisations; and the impetus given to the PROMUJERES microfinance programme. "While some initiatives have not achieved the desired effects and many have fallen short, the opportunities created and the progress made by this institution are a key resource for the development of employment policies based on gender equality; nevertheless, this requires greater support from decision makers and the coordination of joint efforts with other organisations and agencies that directly or indirectly affect the labour market" (Larrea et al., 2006).

This demonstrates the fragility of the implementation of policies developed by the country to combat poverty and create employment, and reveals the lack of political will to meet a social demand and defend work as a basic human right. Instead, in the past decade Ecuador has launched a series of reforms aimed at deregulating labour and making it more flexible, creating legal, social and institutional conditions that pave the way for contracting labour by the hour, for a fixed time period and under temporary contracts, violating the labour rights that the country's working men and women have acquired over the years.

These new measures have had an especially serious impact on women. In the case of third-party and by-the-job contracting, the work of women, children and youth is often considered a "free" contribution by the contractor, who resorts to family labour to meet contractual obligations. This free labour, besides lacking benefits, helps keep the work of at-risk sectors invisible, perpetuating gender and age asymmetries.

According to information from the Central Bank, there are currently 3,680 third-party contracting companies in the country, representing about 800,000 workers. This means that only one of every three Ecuadorians has stable employment. CONAMU estimates that women represent 24 percent of the work force hired under third-party contracting, (www.conamu.gov.ec/estadísticas).

Added to this is the serious deterioration in the stability of institutions over the past 10 years as a result of policies implemented by various governments to dismantle the state. This is reflected in the difficulties in building consensus, developing agreements and implementing sustained public policies and programmes, as well as the lack of

political will to make decisions that imply substantive changes that would benefit the majority of the population and the lack of confidence in the institutions responsible for maintaining democratic order.

In social and organisational terms, Ecuador's political crisis has also affected grassroots movements, which are now suffering from fragmentation and dispersion. This has had a particular impact on the indigenous movement, but is also true of the Afro-Ecuadorian movement and organisations of workers and women.

In contrast with this social and political climate, which has not been conducive to active, committed participation by public institutions, sectors of societies such as trade unions and the indigenous movement, and the business sector, there are other factors in the country that could give impetus to democratic and inclusive public policies on employment. These include a new political stance that is apparent in various local governments, which translates, among other things, into willingness to base public administration on social dialogue. Examples can be seen in various municipalities where problems affecting Ecuadorian society are being resolved creatively at the local level.

Another element that could contribute to the development and implementation of public policies that respect fundamental human rights is closely tied to the increased visibility of the women's movement and the priority it has placed on women's labour rights. Despite the rifts and conflicts that have occurred within the movement, its proposals no longer go unnoticed.

3. Design and relevance of the project

The GRPE Project falls within the ILO's work strategies, as it emphasises decent work and taking a cross-cutting gender approach to the formulation and implementation of policies for eradicating poverty and creating employment. In Ecuador, this project is the continuation of the "Programme of Institution Building for Gender Equality, the Eradication of Poverty and Job Creation" (GPE), which was launched by the ILO in 1999.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in the project's design is that its formulation did not explicitly differentiate between the characteristics of Brazil and Ecuador. The greater priority placed on Brazil, which was reflected in both the budget and the institutional structure for carrying out the project, made consideration of Ecuador's political and social context secondary. As a result, the objectives were overly ambitious for Ecuador, especially in light of the existing social and political conditions.

When the planned objectives are compared to the conditions for success defined in the project, it is clear that complementary measures were needed to ensure a more effective intervention.

Successful achievement of objectives assumed the following conditions: (a) a high level of interest among the public agencies that design and implement anti-poverty and job creation policies and programmes in strengthening the dimension of gender and race/ethnic group; (b) availability of these stakeholders to participate in project activities; (c) existence of a framework of socio-economic policies aimed at eradicating poverty and creating jobs and decent work, with an emphasis on the segment of the

population involved in the informal economy; and (d) available resources for carrying out the activities (ILO).

Careful analysis of these four assumptions reveals that two were not met; this should have led to modifications in the planned activities and strategies or an analysis of a possible readjustment of goals and objectives.

With regard to interest on the part of public agencies, only since 2005, with the involvement of former Labour Minister Galo Chiriboga,⁸ was there openness in this ministry to inclusion of the gender issue. Former officials demonstrated neither interest in nor willingness to consider aspects related to employment of and discrimination against women. This indicates that even more than an institutional environment conducive to reinforcing the gender dimension in public policy, gaining government support for the project's goals depends largely on the individual views of certain authorities. This has serious repercussions for the processes and outcomes of a project.

The climate of socio-economic policies for eradicating poverty and creating jobs and decent work was also less than favourable. A review of progress in the policies and programmes defined by Ecuador in recent years reveals a lack of fulfilment of commitments taken on by the government and constant interruption of processes that supposedly were planned in a participatory manner and agreed to by various public agencies and social organisations.

Because of this, that the project lacked an institutional and political environment for making adequate progress in meeting its objectives. These expectations were therefore excessive given the scenario in which the project was carried out.

The project's goal of working simultaneously on two approaches — gender and race/ethnicity — and correcting asymmetries in labour rights in the informal economy was also overly ambitious.

The project identified two sectors as target groups: (a) officials responsible for designing and managing policies and programmes for the eradication of poverty, creation of jobs and promotion of gender and race/ethnic equality (at the national and local level), and (b) trade unions, employer organisations and organisations of poor women involved in the informal economy.

To implement actions that would have a positive impact on these sectors, the project proposed five strategies: (a) building the capacities of public agencies, (b) providing technical assistance, (c) carrying out pilot programmes, (d) creating and strengthening opportunities for dialogue, and (e) social consensus building and development of a knowledge base.

In light of the evaluation's findings, while the relevant sectors were selected as target groups, because of their organisational characteristics and installed capacity the project should have placed greater emphasis on activities involving organisational development and training. In the case of trade unions, whose practices and rhetoric are still closely tied to the labour sector in the formal economy, for example, it would have been important to encourage debate and reflection about creating channels and linkages that would enable them to incorporate broad sectors of the population working

⁸ During the preparation of this report, Dr. Galo Chiriboga was appointed president of the state-run petroleum company, PetroEcuador. He was replaced by the former vice minister of labour, Dr. José Serrano.

in the so-called informal economy. Similarly, because most trade union leaders are male, it would have been useful to place greater emphasis on training and awareness-raising strategies to encourage them to expand opportunities for women's participation.

This indicates that in the project's design there was insufficient analysis of the target groups' characteristics and capacities. While the various stakeholders value their participation in the informative and training strategies implemented by the project, a more thorough analysis of the target groups' characteristics and capacities would have allowed the design of strategies and actions better suited to their situation and demands, as well as more efficient outcomes and effects.

4. Implementation and performance

Project implementation

Among the people interviewed, there is a perception that there were communication and coordination problems during the first phase of project implementation. These difficulties were later resolved, and by the first quarter of 2005 there were regular exchanges of information and smooth coordination through bi-monthly meetings in which the ILO, CONAMU and the MTE participated. Although the dynamic was smoother after this, much of the project's work depended on the tight schedules of MTE officials, which limited the project's progress at times.

Along with the start-up problems, according to the people interviewed, there was a lack of knowledge, or only general knowledge, about the project's goals and progress. "There were very general guidelines, but a lack of detailed information about specific commitments." Some interviewees coincided in noting that "the project did not begin with clear guidelines." Because of the lack of clarity, the various stakeholders' roles and responsibilities were defined as activities progressed.

Project coordination was done by the ILO office in Lima, with the assistance of consultants at particular times. During the first phase, the project had a permanent consultant in Ecuador, but in the second phase, beginning in February 2005, this was suspended. Since then, support for the project has come from the IPEC project office in Ecuador.

Use of a minimal staff that was removed from the daily context was not the most efficient way to guide and facilitate the implementation of a project meant to address sensitive issues such as those involved in the GRPE. While the high degree of professionalism and commitment on the part of the project coordinator, whose dynamism was especially evident in the second phase, must be recognised, it is clear that the implementation of a project with these characteristics demanded the regular presence of technical and administrative personnel in the target country. The availability of a stable, permanent team is even more necessary given the ILO's representative nature and its credibility in reinforcing channels of communication with institutional stakeholders such as chambers of commerce or trade unions, whose agendas usually do not include issues such as gender or discrimination. A more active ILO presence would also have made it possible to leverage positive outcomes at the local level. The various stakeholders involved in the project acknowledge that there would have been a greater likelihood of solidifying reforms had there been greater participation by the ILO.

In terms of project management, while the ILO's technical cooperation is appreciated, there is interest in ensuring that this support, besides being more permanent, be accompanied by economic resources, especially since the MTE's budget is about US\$12 million a year, equivalent to 0.1 percent of the 2006 budget and 0.2 percent of the 2005 budget.

With regard to channels for decision making, the project was based on collaboration and support, which received a positive assessment from those involved. Nevertheless, there were difficulties in follow-up because of the project's lack of clearly defined opportunities and mechanisms for reflecting on advances or introducing adjustments and new strategies to address problems that arose.

Analysis of efficacy

The project's results reflect significant progress in institutional coordination, especially as of 2005, fostering linkages among organisations that had diverse views and approaches and only sporadic contact before the intervention. Significant advances include the signing of the agreement between the Ministry of Labour and CONAU, which established the institutional and political framework for integrating a gender approach into the design and implementation of public employment policies, and which led to the creation of a Gender and Youth Unit in the ministry. This unit's main purpose is to make equal access to work for men and women an institutional goal of the ministry and take responsibility for training and awareness-raising in this area, as well as coordination with other national and international public agencies and private organisations on gender issues.

Currently, in terms of fostering a gender approach in national policies and programmes, the unit's work is focusing on activities to provide information about women's labour rights, as well as support for the formulation of the Labour Code⁹ and the National Youth Employment Plan from a gender perspective. This unit also represents an opportunity to ensure that policies and programmes designed and implemented in the country take gender into account.

The other agency with which the project developed levels of coordination was the National Labour Council (*Consejo Nacional de Trabajo*, CNT), which was created in 2004 but only began operating in February of this year. The CNT is the official contact for channelling social initiatives related to employment toward the appropriate public agencies.

The CNT has been discussing the possibility of creating a Tripartite Commission on Equality, whose goal would be to make gender an underpinning of all policy. Nevertheless, the council's focus in recent months, which has largely centred on the issue of third-party contracting, has put this initiative on the back burner. It also requires more detailed analysis so as to identify the stakeholders that should participate in such a commission, as well as to consider alternatives for its future sustainability. In discussing whether a Tripartite Commission on Equality would be viable within the CNT, one area to consider is the importance of such a body in enabling all participating stakeholders to internalise rhetoric and practices conducive to equality.

With regard to fostering and strengthening opportunities for consensus building on employment policy, the Dialogue Group on Employment and Gender Policy of Quito (*Mesa de Políticas de Empleo y Género de Quito*) — consisting of the MTE, CONAMU,

⁹ Approval of the new Labour Code is expected around September of this year.

the Ministry of Tourism and various community organisations — was reactivated within the framework of the project. With support from the project, this group developed a Strategic Plan and participated in various training and awareness-raising events. These actions, however, were very limited in comparison to the objectives set for the group, which involved political advocacy to improve employment conditions for women; the formulation of technical and political proposals for making gender a cross-cutting issue; providing information about women's economic and labour rights; making it possible for women to demand respect for those rights, through activities designed to demonstrate the differentiated impact of national and international economic and employment policies on the lives of men and women; and monitoring of the implementation of proposals and commitments.

In Azuay and Guayas, the project served as a catalyst for the formation of dialogue groups on gender, employment, tourism and microfinance, as collective bodies for planning and coordinating actions aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic group, social class, age or social condition in the areas of employment and access to resources for production, as well as supporting the formulation of the groups' strategic plans. The experience in Azuay, which received high marks from the agencies and organisations involved in the project, brought together the provincial government of Azuay, the Municipality of Cuenca, social development organisations, women's organisations, academic institutions, business organisations and workers' organisations. In Guayas, the dialogue group mainly consists of non-governmental organisations and civic groups connected to the informal sector, but so far it has failed to capture the attention and interest of the local government.

Both working groups, which resulted from training processes involving some of the participants, encouraged similar workshops in their own jurisdictions; more importantly, they were able to ground these efforts in demands stemming from their local situations. In Azuay, for example, the dialogue group has become involved in the Municipality of Cuenca's initiative to implement a job bank by mobilising resources to help women get occupational training¹⁰

In Guayas, the dialogue group listened to the expectations of the regional women's movement with regard to microcredit and discrimination. Despite this wealth of information, the group has had difficulties in moving toward advocacy, concentrating instead of training for its members. The lack of linkage with local employment policies, either because they do not exist or because approaches are radically different,¹¹ hinders the dialogue group from playing its role in the development, promotion and follow-up of public policy at the local level. There is a risk that the dialogue group could become simply a training ground, or at best the implementer of specific projects that are limited in scope, veering away from the original purpose for which it was created.¹²

The dialogue groups are part of a regional effort to establish a model of social dialogue within and among institutions and organisations. They have remained active thanks to

¹⁰ Interview with Carmela Bardales, coordinator of the Dialogue Group on Gender, Employment, Tourism and Microfinance of the Province of Azuay.

¹¹ The current government of the Municipality of Guayaquil, for example, has a management style that allows little room for participation and democratic action and does not include vulnerable social sectors.

¹² Interview with Patricia Bermúdez, Dialogue Group on Gender, Employment and Microfinance of Guayas.

those involved,¹³ because despite the diversity of their members, there is a perception that “working together is the ideal way to have an impact and close the gaps of inequality.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, in the medium term this dynamism could encounter limits because of high staff turnover in public agencies. Their survival also depends on the importance placed by public officials on developing proposals with strong civic roots, as well as on the involvement of business sectors that do not have a tradition of this type of participation. These risks are accompanied by logistical and operational difficulties; the maintenance of tripartite spaces could be reduced to dialogue among sectors that, despite nuances, share a common vision and approach but lack the capacity for direct negotiation with those responsible for defining and implementing public policy on social issues.

The strategy for raising broad public awareness about employment and gender issues reached 990 people. Of these, 70.7 percent were directly trained by the project through 19 events of various types (workshops, seminars, conferences, etc.), while 29.3 percent were reached by six events designed to replicate these experiences. Besides developing this human capital, the project also trained 28 trainers, both men and women, who have the skills necessary to continue the awareness-raising and training process in the project’s areas of focus. It should be noted that the project promoted the participation of women trade union members in the training process and that one of them replicated her experience.

This strategy was complemented by the dissemination of modules about ILO conventions on equality and labour rights for women, which for many participants constituted “new learnings, because in many cases we didn’t even know these existed.”¹⁵

Other project outcomes in organisation and policy advocacy are, in order, the gender agendas prepared with the participation of domestic workers, women working in the informal economy and women involved in trade unions, and the declaration issued on International Women’s Day.

The project also expanded knowledge of the relationships among gender, ethnicity, poverty and employment through six studies that include proposals and policy recommendations for incorporating a gender dimension into national programs for eradicating poverty and creating employment.

In general, the outcomes show that the project made it possible to leverage actions that had varying degrees of maturity, in some cases reactivating and in other cases solidifying processes that the women’s movement had been fostering without much impact before 2005, such as the establishment of closer coordination with the MTE. In this area, the stakeholders who were interviewed acknowledged and valued the ILO’s role; they also noted that the project’s approach and scope gave new impetus to the gender dimension in ILO rhetoric.

Despite the importance and relevance of the outcomes, they were not sufficient to meet the project’s objectives. The following table describes the main obstacles:

¹³ It is important to note that the project had no economic resources for the dialogue groups. This apparent limitation did not restrict their operation, however, as the commitment by the institutions coordinating the groups enabled them to gain access to other resources.

¹⁴ Interview with Carmela Bardales of the Dialogue Group on Gender, Employment, Tourism and Microfinance of the Province of Azuay.

¹⁵ Interview with José Yagual, coordinator of the FUT.

Description of the specific objectives of the project	Degree to which they were met
Incorporate and strengthen a gender and race/ethnicity approach in policies and strategies for eradicating poverty and creating employment and decent work, targeting workers in the informal economy.	Because no such policies and programmes existed, it was impossible to strengthen national policies and programmes for eradicating poverty and creating employment and decent work through the delivery of conceptual elements and tools for fostering the interrelationship between objectives related to social welfare and approaches fostering equality.
Provide technical support for at least two direct programmes in each country for the eradication of poverty or creation of employment, targeting workers in the informal economy, with the goal of making gender and race/ethnicity cross-cutting issues and implementing pilot experiences that can be replicated.	Because of the lack of programmes for poverty eradication and employment creation in the informal sector, technical support targeted the Ministry of Labour and Employment for the signing of an Inter-Agency Cooperation Agreement with CONAMU, which provided the framework for the project's implementation, and trade union organisations, the CNT and domestic workers for the design of their agenda and dissemination of their agreements and proposals. There was also coordination with employer organisations, mainly to encourage their participation in training. This objective, therefore, was partially met.
Reinforce the issues of eradication of poverty, creation of employment and reduction of the lack of decent work in the informal economy, and promotion of gender and racial/ethnic equality on agendas and in opportunities for social dialogue, and foster the participation of tripartite organisations and those promoting gender and racial/ethnic equality (as well as that of workers in the informal economy) in debate about the design and implementation of policies for eradicating poverty and creating employment and decent work.	There was significant progress in this area because of the reactivation of the Dialogue Group on Employment and Gender Policies in Quito and the strengthening of consensus-building bodies (dialogue groups on gender, employment, tourism and microfinance) in Guayaquil and Cuenca. While these groups have gained experience and their members demonstrate a growing degree of commitment, there are at least two weaknesses that could jeopardise their functioning: (a) limited capacity for advocacy on the formulation and implementation of public policy, and (b) partial representation and participation by the various social sectors (business and government sectors are not participating in the Guayaquil group, for example, while in Cuenca the Chamber of Tourism is the only business group participating).
Extract lessons learned and good practices from the pilot experiences carried out by the project in the incorporation of the race/ethnicity dimension into policies for eradicating poverty, creating employment and reducing the deficit of decent work in the informal economy.	This objective was met through research and the creation of knowledge; dissemination of the information and debate over and discussion of the results are pending tasks.

This reflects the difficulties encountered in achieving the project's main objective. This intervention, which was meant to "help to reduce poverty and the deficit of decent work in the informal economy by strengthening the gender and race/ethnicity dimensions in strategies, policies and programmes for eradicating poverty and creating employment," focused mainly on fostering institutional coordination, strengthening the MTE's ability to address the gender issue, and holding a variety of training and awareness-raising events.

With regard to the other dimensions included in the project design — informal economy and race/ethnicity — there were difficulties in achieving the expected results. The ILO

intervention lacked adequate conditions for active intervention in improving employment in the informal economy. This was not part of the MTE's agenda in the past four years, nor has it been the focus of consistent, systematic government concern. Its closest approach to the issue may be the recent debate over and questioning of third-party labour contracting, which led in late June 2006 to the passage of the Law on Third-Party Labour Contracting, which includes labour rights for contractors. Nevertheless, in the negotiations over this law in the CNT, there was no direct contribution from the project.

The organisational crisis affecting the trade union sector as a result of the deregulation of the labour market has led it to concentrate chiefly on reclaiming labour rights that have been undermined. Policies for promoting equality and combating gender discrimination have been placed on the back burner. For the time being, this issue seems to be a central concern only of women. For example, the interviews indicated that the interest expressed by female trade union members in strategies for reaching out to women working in the informal sector or other forms of unstable employment is not shared by the trade unions' official structures and governing bodies.

Nor was it possible to address the issue of race/ethnicity so as to include this approach in policies and programmes for reducing poverty and the deficit of decent work. To a great extent, this difficulty was due to the breakdown and subsequent internal restructuring of Ecuador's indigenous movement, which resulted in an agenda that had little in common with the project's objectives. CONAIE's problems also had an impact on the government agency responsible for defining public policy for the indigenous sector, CODENPE, whose main concerns centred on supporting the movement's organisational processes.

Finally, the fragmentation and dispersion of the Afro-Ecuadorian movement kept it from working actively to support the project's proposals for introducing a gender and race/ethnicity dimension in labour policies that could affect that sector.

Analysis of efficiency

The terms of reference for this evaluation note that the analysis of efficiency "should establish the relationship between resources invested and outcomes obtained, reviewing the resources used by the project and expenses incurred during the period." Because the economic information necessary for such an analysis was unavailable, this section contains only general observations on the use of resources and the quality and quantity of the outcomes achieved.

Besides the overall amount for the project, the only budget data available for review for this evaluation was information from the first half of 2006. It would be hasty to extrapolate general conclusions about the project over the entire implementation period based only on this information. Nevertheless, a review of planning for the period from January-June 2006 allows us to make some general observations:

- The project had a budget of US\$76,000 for the first half of 2006. This amount was distributed as follows: 31 percent for activities, 56 percent for personnel and 13 percent for miscellaneous items and missions. This distribution shows that the largest proportion of the budget was earmarked for personnel, reaffirming the project's emphasis on technical assistance (see Annex 6).
- From the activities plan for this period, it can be inferred that the various stakeholders who participated in the project mobilised additional resources that enabled them to complement the ILO's contribution. Otherwise it would have been difficult to carry out the planned activities. The mobilising of additional

resources was generally done through in-kind contributions (buildings, materials, etc) or the labour of those participating in the project. This makes it difficult to quantify the resources mobilised within the country to achieve the planned outcomes.

Based on the results achieved, however, it is possible to note that certain actions fostered as part of the project contributed to its efficiency. The main ones are:

- To achieve the project's outcomes, various stakeholders had to work in a coordinated and complementary manner. This was the common denominator for project strategies targeting public agencies as well as those that required mechanisms for dialogue with civic organisations (dialogue groups, for example).
- The fact the levels of inter-institutional coordination and dialogue were maintained shows that the project included strategies and approaches that attracted the institutions' attention. Had this not been the case, the degree of coordination would have decreased shortly after the project began.
- The number of activities and the intensity of the work as of February 2005 reflect significant levels of efficiency in the direction of the project, especially given the adverse social and political scenario in which it was carried out.

Analysis of effectiveness

One of the most important outcomes in terms of institutional solidity, the formation of the MTE's Gender and Youth Unit, currently faces some problems that could jeopardise its sustainability. Three weaknesses should be noted:

1. The unit lacks stable technical personnel. The two people currently working in the unit are not part of the MTE technical staff and do not report within its official structure. They have been contracted for a set time period and can be dismissed freely.

According to the current coordinator of the unit, efforts to invite MTE technical staff members to join this new body have been unsuccessful so far. According to some of the people interviewed, this lack of response indicates that the importance of a gender approach still has not been assimilated into the agency's mindset, practice and rhetoric.

It can therefore be concluded that the existence of the Gender and Youth Unit is basically due to the personal conviction of current authorities and the people contracted for the unit. Still pending is the implementation of a process to ensure that the institution takes "ownership" of the unit. If this does not occur, the possibility of the unit being maintained in the future will depend on whether it is a priority for the incoming authorities.

2. A second element, related to the first, that could jeopardise the results is related to the very creation of the unit. During this process, which received technical assistance from SENRES (a government agency whose role is to support the institutional development of other government agencies), insufficient attention was paid to ensuring the budget allocations required for the unit to function. This oversight meant that although the MTE has a unit whose task is to promote the inclusion of a gender approach in employment policies, the human and economic resources necessary for it to function are not available.

The current authorities, who are convinced of the importance of including a gender approach in the MTE's work, have until December 2006 to make the administrative arrangements necessary to ensure budget allocations that will enable the Gender and Youth Unit to operate; if that is not done, this outcome will probably be affected.

It should also be noted that the unit, which was initially conceived as an advisory body, ended up being part of the Employment Office, which has a more operational role within the MTE structure. To place it in a better position to establish gender as a cross-cutting issue, with decision-making capacity and a high enough rank, it is important to consider the viability of modifying the unit's location within the institutional structure, making it an advisory body to the minister.

3. A third element that could imply a risk for the progress made with the creation of the Gender and Youth Unit as an institutional support for fostering the inclusion of a gender approach in the work of the MTE and other agencies involved in employment issues is the thematic dispersion in the unit. Youth and gender have some elements in common that are related to discrimination against or the exclusion of significant sectors of society. Nevertheless, there are also differences and specific characteristics in each sector that could lead, under certain circumstances, to one being overshadowed by the other, as unfortunately occurred recently because of the priority that the MTE gave to addressing child labour, to the detriment of gender issues.

In terms of the project's impact on the broader political framework, while the efforts mentioned above are noteworthy with regard to the inclusion of a gender approach in the National Youth Employment Program and the new Labour Code, there were factors outside the project's management that severely limited its ability to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the deficit of decent work. These external factors include a lack of public policies for reactivating employment and the low priority given to this issue by the Ecuadorian government. This is reflected in the limited importance given by various government agencies to the issue of labour and employment. The ministries related to social sectors have formed a collective for coordination, the Social Front. Nevertheless, according to MTE officials, the issue of employment has not been a concern of the other ministries, and social policy continues to have a strong welfare bias and does not focus heavily on the reinsertion of vulnerable sectors into the sphere of production.

Given the lack of national employment policies that would allow for stable guidelines and economic resources for reducing poverty and the deficit of decent work, conceptual and regulatory contributions targeting gender discrimination appear to be insufficient. Nevertheless, they represent an important starting point that should be reinforced through public programmes and policies that have a direct impact on the creation of employment and reduction of precarious forms of labour.

In terms of fostering tripartite dialogue among public institutions, the business sector and the trade union sector, adequate fluidity in addressing the gender issue was not achieved. The characteristics of women's labour in Ecuador, which is mainly tied to the informal economy, restrict CONAMU's work to the sphere of companies and trade unions, where women constitute a relatively small percentage of workers. Added to this is the relative lack of importance placed on the gender issue by the business sector and trade unions, as reflected in a lack of openness toward CONAMU.¹⁶ This can be

¹⁶ Interview with Amparo Armas, CONAMU.

seen, for example, in the fact that there has been no consideration of the contribution that CONAMU could make to the formulation of the new Labour Code and its absence from debate over the Law on Third-Party Labour Contracting.

In the trade union movement, meanwhile, there is a perception that CONAMU has not shown enough flexibility to train union women or been willing to establish solid partnerships with the women's secretariats that exist in many of the unions. In general, the people interviewed show a certain distrust of CONAMU's role. It was stated that instead of bringing together and facilitating the participation of working women during the project, CONAMU marginalised them and showed little openness to dialogue. In the view of the interviewees from the trade union movement, working women's participation in the project was limited to training events, which, although they enabled the women to acquire new knowledge, were insufficient for modifying behaviours, attitudes and practices in labour unions.

The existence of varied and sometimes contradictory views and perceptions, besides revealing different aspects of a problem, indicates that the project was able to reach institutions that did not know each other before, while introducing a new element into the rhetoric of sectors that traditionally are reluctant to even reflect on gender issues. This, however, should not mask the need for additional efforts to reduce the level of tension and possible conflict in tripartite dialogue, strengthening awareness-raising and training strategies on gender issues and reinforcing CONAMU's capacities.

CONAMU's situation merits particular reflection. Its role in guiding gender policy in the country has been limited recently by two elements: (a) the crisis of disintegration affecting the women's movement in Ecuador, which at times has led to internal confrontations and power struggles, and (b) the significant reduction in CONAMU's budget for supporting organisational strengthening and follow-up,¹⁷ which makes a constant presence and interaction in social dynamics difficult. The latter partly explains CONAMU's sporadic participation in the dialogue groups in Cuenca and Guayaquil.

Finally, one of the key obstacles to achieving more lasting results, as well as advocacy processes with greater impact, was that the time frame for implementation (February 2005 to June 2006) was too short and technical resources too limited to allow for adequate follow-up. Discriminatory practices and approaches cannot be modified in such a short time.

5. Lessons learned

One of the aspects that the institutions involved in the project value most highly is the inclusion of a gender approach in the issue of employment and labour. Despite the limitations mentioned in the preceding sections, the mere fact that this issue is now on the agenda of agencies such as the Ministry of Labour constitutes progress that cannot be ignored.

Another especially relevant aspect is related to the ILO's emphasis on dialogue and building tripartite bodies, which in a country such as Ecuador raises the need to establish minimal platforms for negotiation.

¹⁷ In government funds for 2006, COMARU has just US\$1.4 million, equivalent to 0.016 percent of the national budget and about one-tenth of the amount allocated to the MTE for that year.

Besides the two points that have been noted, other outcomes of the project could serve as a basis for deepening, expanding and consolidating the progress made so far and increase prospects for sustainability. These include:

- The inter-agency agreement between the MTE and CONAMU, which paves the way for coordination and dialogue to foster ongoing consideration of the gender issue.
- The availability of significant trained social capital with a raised awareness, which is clearly one of the best guarantees of continuity for the work areas and approaches that have been initiated.
- The reactivation and greater dynamism of the dialogue groups and their potential for creating public policy that, as in the case of the groups in Guayas and Azuay, is rooted in local processes and situations.
- The openness of the current CNT Technical Secretariat to give impetus to areas of work that will consolidate the progress made by the project.
- The formation of the Youth and Gender Unit, which, despite the weaknesses and risks indicated above, is a good start for establishing an institutional approach to gender within the MTE.
- The inter-agency synergies established within the framework of the project, which have laid the groundwork for joint efforts toward equality.
- The impetus that the project acquired as of Phase II, which was reflected in various events and actions.

Beyond the benefits at the national level, for OSRA the project has been a concrete experience within the framework of its pro-equality principles and mandates and has enriched efforts to make gender a cross-cutting issue in the National Plan for Decent Work, toward which the ILO is working in Ecuador.

Factors that could limit the sustainability of the results and the possibilities for transferring them include:

- The absence of public policies for reactivating employment and policies that would have an impact on the informal economy, along with budget allocations for creating new jobs, severely limits the area of action of projects that, like the ILO's, are meant to combat poverty and the deficit of decent work. While some progress, like the advances made by this project, is possible in the institutional, legal and regulatory spheres, closing gaps related to gender-based and racial/ethnic differences in and characteristics of employment remains a pending task.
- The Gender and Youth Unit's continuity in the MTE will depend on both negotiation of budget allocations for hiring a stable staff and a review of its role with the new MTE officials, encouraging them to enable the unit to regain the advisory role originally conceived for it so that it can ensure that gender becomes a cross-cutting issue in the policies and programmes implemented by the MTE.
- To maintain and expand the promotion and inclusion of a gender approach in public policies and programmes on poverty and employment, the limited installed institutional capacity of the MTE, trade unions, businesses and the CNT as the body responsible for coordination and consensus building among those three sectors underscores the need for an ongoing strategy to build capacities and strengthen partnerships and synergies with CONAMU.

With regard to the future of the inter-institutional dialogue groups, it is important to note that the support provided by the project for the formulation of strategic plans is an underpinning that will guide their work. Nevertheless, without strategies for political advocacy, there is a risk that the dialogue and efforts at consensus building will fade

away. Many interviewees agreed that “the dialogue groups must lead to concrete results.”

In the dialogue groups it is also necessary to continue making an effort to include business sectors whose openness to the gender issue is still limited. Except for the Chamber of Tourism in Azuay, it has been difficult to spark interest among business associations, which have shown little willingness to engage in dialogue. This situation is even more complex in Quito, where the business sector has not been part of the dialogue group.

Similar efforts will also be required to achieve the labour union movement’s active participation in the dialogue groups. While the project fostered the participation of women trade unionists in these groups, they did not have a constant presence. The reason for their these women’s intermittent participation lies in the lack of confidence in CONAMU and other government bodies as interlocutors open to incorporating and processing workers’ demands.¹⁸ This demonstrates the need to strengthen their capacity for negotiation and presenting proposals.

Finally, among the lessons learned, the interviewees noted the need to review channels of communication related to the ILO’s portfolio of initiatives and support in Ecuador. According to several of the interviewees, it was impossible to develop close relationships with other ILO projects involving the MTE or with other inter-agency initiatives such as the Labour Observatory with a gender approach until the final months of the project being evaluated here. There is a perception that the projects are separate and parallel; this leads to a recommendation that such arrangements be reviewed to identify synergies and possible interconnections that could help optimise the projects and the overall technical assistance being provided.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

In a context marked by deep inequalities, which have a particularly negative impact on women, interventions aimed at making these inequalities visible and helping to generate policies to resolve this situation are unquestionably relevant. The GRPE project laid significant groundwork and achieved valuable outcomes that should be strengthened, consolidated and expanded in the future. This has led the public institutions that participated in the project to formally express to the ILO their expectation that the progress will be expanded through another project that will build on the one that ended in June 2006.

To develop guidelines for the scope and content of a new project, this section offers recommendations that, from the standpoint of the evaluation and in the view of the people interviewed, could help enhance the outcomes of a new intervention.

Before outlining these areas, it should be noted that in the short term, it is important to guarantee the consolidation of one of the most relevant results of the project, the institutional foundation of the MTE’s Gender and Youth Unit. In light of the risks faced by this unit, which are described in the Analysis of Effectiveness (Section 4), it would be helpful for the ILO, in coordination with CONAMU, to foster a process of advocacy

¹⁸ Interviews with Carmen Pinto, vice president of the CEOLS Employee Association, and Mariana Guambo, president of the Continental Committee of Women (*Comité Continental de Mujeres*, COMUD).

with current authorities to ensure by December that budget allocations are made to finance its operation.

This activity could be reinforced through meetings with the presidential candidates expected to run in the October elections, so as to gain the political backing needed to ensure the continuity of the project's outcomes, complementing the efforts that CONAMU is currently making in this areas.

Operational guidelines for the design and performance of a new project

In terms of the operational approach to the design and implementation of the project, the institutional stakeholders generally agree on the following points:

1. The need for participatory, consensus-based design so as to achieve greater interconnectedness among the strengths, resources and areas of expertise of the participating institutions and the identified challenges that are to be addressed by the new interventions.
2. The signing of agreements and letters of understanding before activities begin. This could allow for greater agility in the performance of projects that require the involvement of several government agencies, reducing the time and effort needed during the implementation phase to reach agreements and inter-agency commitments necessary to begin the project. This is even more important because Ecuador will hold a presidential election in October. The existence of prior agreements could help guarantee the future political commitment of agencies such as the MTE and CONAMU.
3. A preliminary survey of the installed capacity of the stakeholders who will participate in the project, as a prior condition for defining the specific roles and commitments of each during the project.
4. The identification of synergies between the new project and other initiatives in which the ILO participates, such as the Labour Observatory with a gender lens, so as to minimise the risk of sponsoring parallel actions that have few interconnections.
5. Formation by the ILO of a technical and administrative team with shared responsibility for the project, which can complement the installed capacity in CONAMU or the MTE. Having a team, which should not consist of more than two or three people, would also allow for better communication and coordination, as well as monitoring of the initiatives undertaken.

Guidelines for the scope and focus of a new project

According to the consultations carried out as part of this evaluation, as well as the review of project information and documentation, an initial conclusion about the scope of a new intervention is that it is important to consolidate and reinforce the outcomes already achieved, so as to build on what has been done and leverage learnings. The consolidation of outcomes implies focusing basically on the inclusion of a gender approach in national policies and programmes related to employment and labour rights, which would mean, in contrast to the goals and objectives of the GRPE project, a more precise and concise formulation.

A second conclusion concerns the importance of identifying a national programme or policy that is currently in effect that can serve as a framework for the implementation of a new initiative, so as to minimise the risk of encountering, as this project did, a context in which there is a lack of socio-economic policies aimed at eradicating poverty and creating employment and decent work.

The recommendation is to analyse the possibility of framing a new project within the Equal Opportunities Plan (*Plan de Igualdad de Oportunidades*, PIO) that CONAMU has been implementing since 1998 as a result of the Beijing accords.¹⁹ Besides responding to constitutional mandates, this plan is rooted in an institutional structure (CONAMU) that has installed capacity and is highly motivated to defend and demand economic and social rights for women.

Framing a probable new project within PIO would also help leverage an intervention that is closely in line with the ILO's general principles and objectives with regard to promoting decent work and productive, remunerated employment; adequate labour protection and benefits; full respect for the fundamental principles and rights at work; and real social dialogue (www.oit.org.pe).

With regard to the focus, it is recommended that the new project explicitly take a rights-based approach, with an emphasis on equality. This would be important for developing strategies for demanding that the Ecuadorian government respect and protect the rights promoted in the project, fostering policies that help modify the low priority placed on implementing measures for protecting and assisting a population that suffers exclusion and discrimination because of its gender. The rights-based approach would also provide an appropriate conceptual foundation for the integral, multi-sector work needed for an intervention involving poverty and the informal economy.

An overview of likely areas of intervention

Amid the significant political instability that has characterised Ecuador for at least the past decade, the greatest challenge for projects that involve the will and commitment of government institutions lies in maintaining the continuity of the processes that are launched. Although there are no easy answers, a sense of ownership by the populations and sectors whose situations the project aims to address, as well as recognition of their rights, could help minimise the risks that the gains will be paralysed or lose ground. One recommendation to consider in the design and implementation of a future project, therefore, is an intensive **information strategy** regarding labour rights, using the mass media as much as possible so that the general public becomes aware of constitutional mandates and the international commitments signed by the country.

For a new phase, the implementation of a **training and awareness-raising strategy** aimed at creating and reinforcing new skills, attitudes and practices among the ILO's three constituent parts would continue to be relevant. These strategies, however, must be adapted to the characteristics of each social sector. The following section provides some guidelines in this regard.

Based on the suggestions and recommendations of people involved in the labour movement, training for this sector should target two groups:

- (a) Training for working women, to enhance and expand their skills and knowledge of rights, organisation and analysis of current events. The content would include the national legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as the content and scope of international conventions, with an emphasis on areas related to women's rights. Because these types of processes cannot fully be addressed through isolated events, it is necessary to plan more systematic training courses. It could be useful to design forms and methods of training that do not require that the women be present at all times,

¹⁹ The PIO currently in effect has a time frame of 2004-2009.

combining seminars and workshops with virtual methods, accompanied by follow-up during and after the training.

- (b) Processes for raising awareness about gender and discrimination, targeting national and local trade union leaders, so as to create equitable conditions for women's participation in these organisations. The goal of this type of process is not only to strengthen the women's secretariats within the trade unions, but to help them internalise awareness that the gender issue must be part of both the unions' actions and their regulatory structures.

With regard to the labour movement, besides fostering training and awareness-raising processes, it is recommended that work be done on methodologies and specific negotiation tools to enable workers to include this dimension in all their efforts to claim and defend their rights.

With regard to personnel working in public agencies such as the Ministry of Labour and the National Labour Council, which require capacity building and an expansion of the awareness that some officials, both men and women, have developed about gender issues, it is necessary to design ongoing training processes that go beyond participation in specific events. This recommendation is based not only on the relatively higher degree of professionalism in the public sector, but also on the fact that such processes are more effective than informative workshops and seminars.

With the business sector, it is important to continue efforts to raise awareness. More than academic events, the approach should emphasise that improvements in the area of labour can be accompanied by economic benefits and improve the business sector's image. One tool that could contribute to this is to encourage internships or the sharing of experiences with peer organisations in other countries in the region where more sustained progress has been made in combating discrimination and inequalities in work and employment as part of social responsibility policies. Brazil's experience could serve as an example to be emulated.²⁰

Because compliance with labour rights and elimination of gender discrimination require establishing relationships and coordinating with institutions not just in the sphere of labour and employment, but also in areas such as health, education, finance, welfare and social development, training and awareness-raising actions should take a multi-sector approach that includes various government agencies. In inter-agency training and awareness-raising actions, it would be helpful to emphasise the participation of mid-level professionals, among whom there is likely to be less turnover.

In the area of **creating and strengthening organisational capacities**, there are elements that should be expanded and consolidated in a new project phase. The following is a list, though not exhaustive, of recommendations:

- With the Ministry of Labour, for example, there is a need to continue focusing on the operation of the Gender and Youth Unit. Among other things, this implies support for the agreement and work plan developed by this unit and CONAMU. While reinforcing this unit, it is crucial to continue emphasising the importance of incorporating a gender approach in all areas and at all levels of the MTE.
- It would be helpful to support efforts to publicise and raise public awareness about the role of the National Labour Council. The potential of a tripartite advisory body could be optimised if society recognises its importance.

²⁰ Interview with Rocío Rosero, director of CONAMU.

Internally, the council needs technical assistance to analyse efficient, sustainable alternatives for making gender a cross-cutting approach in its work, contributing to the formulation of inclusive regulatory policies and proposals. One alternative that has been discussed is the creation of a Tripartite Commission on Equality. Diverging views about this were expressed during the evaluation.

Besides this alternative, others could be discussed, including formal, ongoing guidance from CONAMU. In any event, it is important to emphasise to the various stakeholders involved in the National Labour Council the importance of dialogue as a tool for equality.

- With the trade union sector, besides implementing strategies to support the strengthening of these organisations, the project should consider encouraging reflection and analysis about how to recreate the structure and composition of the major labour organisations. This strategy is crucial in light of the changes that Ecuador has experienced in the area of labour and employment. The weight of the informal economy, as well as the increase in contracting by the hour, for a limited time, by the job, etc., are trends to which unions have failed to respond effectively. The interviews indicate that only CEOSL is involved in an internal process of analysis to explore how to integrate workers in the informal economy²¹ and sectors such as agriculture into its structure. The women trade union members interviewed also stressed their determination to continue insisting on the inclusion in their organisations of women involved in the informal economy and precarious forms of work.

This implies the adaptation of trade union organisations to the current social and economic situation, with new membership strategies, better services for members and women, stronger organisations and union representation in the informal economy.

- Along with the previous point, it is important to help small businesses and workers engaged in precarious employment to organise and gain broader representation so they can reclaim their rights and make proposals aimed at resolving their problems, especially those related to the unequal impact of labour deregulation on women.

One additional way in which a new project could contribute is by promoting a **strategy for advocacy and fostering political dialogue**, with particular emphasis on dialogue groups and trade unions, to help expand opportunities for democratic civic action and participation by sectors of society that have traditionally been excluded.

The progress made in reactivating or establishing dialogue groups should be reinforced to ensure smoother operation, without the interruptions that have marked their work in past years, as well as ongoing public involvement in the groups. The sustainability of these groups will probably depend on how they place their issues on the agenda for public debate, contributing to the design of social policies rooted in progress made at the local level.

One element that could contribute to the reinforcement of these mechanisms is the sharing and discussion of the studies that were part of the GRPE project. The results of

²¹ If CEOSL's current concerns take root, this could represent an important opportunity for supporting the formulation of a strategic plan that could pave the way for a broader movement of working men and women.

these studies could provide input for raising awareness about inequalities in Ecuador and moving toward subsequent discussion of proposals for employment policies that include a gender approach.

7. Assessment of the evaluation process

This evaluation, which was originally planned to last from late June to 24 July 2006 encountered difficulties at the outset because of problems with delivery of documentation from Lima. Because of the lack of these materials and information about the people and organisations to be included in interviews in Ecuador, the evaluation could not begin until mid-July 2006. For that reason, the preliminary report was submitted on 8 August.

Another limitation, mentioned in the introduction to this document, was that it was impossible to set up interviews with representatives of the business sector or gather the views of all of the country's main trade union organisations. A process as intensive as that begun by this project would merit more time for analysing learnings and gathering broader viewpoints. Nevertheless, based on the interviews that were done, it was possible to establish a diverse, complementary overview that enables us to understand the various facets of the intervention and make suggestions for the future.

In personal terms, this evaluation has been a significant learning experience and a valuable opportunity to meet again with people who are giving impetus, from various standpoints, to an attitude in Ecuador of commitment to the human rights of women, with particular emphasis on the areas of labour and employment.

8. Annexes

Annex 1: Interviews

Persons interviewed	Date
José Serrano, Ministry of Labour and Employment	17 July 2006
Marianela Navas, Coordinator of the Gender Equity and Youth Unit	17 July 2006
Santiago Yagual, President of the Single Workers Front (<i>Frente Unitario de Trabajadores</i>)	19 July 2006
Martha Lucio, adviser to CORPO-QUITO project	20 July 2006
Walter Tapia, technical secretary of the National Labour Council	21 July 2006
Carmela Bardales, Dialogue Group on Gender, Employment, Tourism and Microfinance of the Province of Azuay	25 July 2006
Amparo Armas, sub-process for formulation of public policies, CONAMU	25 July 2006
Rocío Rosero, Director, CONAMU	31 July 2006
Carmen Pinto, assistant to the president and vice president of the CEOLS Employee Association	31 July 2006
José Arciniegas, President of CEOLS	1 August 2006
Mariana Guambo, President of the Continental Committee of Women (COMUD) and vice president of CEOLS, in charge of the Area for Women, Youth and Senior Citizens	3 August 2006
Patricia Bermúdez, Dialogue Group on Gender, Employment, Tourism and Microfinance of the Coast	3 August 2006

Annex 2

Interview Guide 1: For technical personnel

1. What was the role of your organisation or agency in the project?
2. What are the principal outcomes of the project?
3. Were these outcomes expected, or were they greater than expected? Were all expected outcomes achieved?
4. What are the most significant changes that the project achieved?
5. Once the project has finished, how will the outcomes be maintained?
6. What role will your organisation or agency play in this process?
7. Indicate the project's strong points.
8. Indicate the project's weak points.
9. In your opinion, during the implementation period (2003-2006), what factors affected the project, aiding or limiting the planned activities or objectives?
10. Recommendations for the future, should a new phase be implemented.

Interview Guide 2: For people in management positions

1. What expectations does your organisation or agency have for a new project?
2. What role would your organisation or agency play in a new project?
3. How should the issue of the informal economy be addressed in the future, keeping in mind that most of the work force, particularly women, is in this sector?
4. What is being done and what could be done to link the issues of race/ethnicity and employment?

Annex No. 3

Poverty by ethnic group, sex and geographic sector

Ethnic group	Area	Sex	Poverty measured by unmet basic needs ²²
Indigenous	Urban		89.9
		Women	60.7
		Men	59.9
	Rural		61.4
		Women	96.3
		Men	96.5
Afro-Ecuadorian	Urban		96.2
		Women	70.3
		Men	62.6
	Rural		62.2
		Women	62.9
		Men	87.3
Mixed race	Urban		87.3
		Women	87.3
		Men	87.2
	Rural		60.4
		Women	45.4
		Men	44.8
White	Urban		46.1
		Women	84.4
		Men	84.2
	Rural		84.5
		Women	45.0
		Men	38.8
Other	Urban		38.0
		Women	39.7
		Men	72.2
	Rural		71.6
		Women	72.7
		Men	60.9
Total	Urban		53.6
		Women	53.6
		Men	53.6
	Rural		86.6
		Women	86.8
		Men	86.3

Source: SIISE, Version 4.0
Prepared by the author

²² Poverty measured by unmet basic needs is the percentage of the population that persistently lacks adequate housing, health care, education and employment.

Annex 4

Percentages of employment, underemployment and unemployment by city and sex, February 2003 to October 2005

Sex	City	Adequate employment	Visible under-employment	Invisible under-employment	Full unemployment	Hidden unemployment	Total unemployment
Male	Cuenca	61.2	4.8	30.1	2.9	1.0	3.8
	Guayaquil	42.5	8.4	40.3	6.1	2.8	8.9
	Quito	62.7	3.9	26.7	5.8	1.0	6.8
	Total	51.7	6.4	34.3	5.7	2.0	7.7
Female	Cuenca	34.3	9.6	49.8	4.8	1.5	6.3
	Guayaquil	25.7	10.3	47.4	9.0	7.5	16.5
	Quito	36.8	8.4	40.0	10.4	4.4	14.8
	Total	31.0	9.5	44.6	9.2	5.7	15.0
Total	Cuenca	49.1	7.0	39.0	3.7	1.2	4.9
	Guayaquil	36.0	9.1	43.1	7.2	4.6	11.8
	Quito	51.8	5.8	32.3	7.7	2.5	10.1
	Total	43.3	7.6	38.5	7.1	3.5	10.6

Taken from Larrea, et al., 2006

Labour sector and class of unemployment, by city and sex: February 2003 to October 2005

Sex	City	Modern sector	Informal sector	Agriculture sector	Domestic sector	Unemployment through job loss	New unemployment
Male	Cuenca	44.1	50.5	1.5	0.2	2.6	1.2
	Guayaquil	42.7	46.6	0.5	1.4	6.6	2.2
	Quito	53.3	39.0	0.3	0.6	5.7	1.1
	Total	47.0	43.9	0.5	1.0	6.0	1.7
Female	Cuenca	36.8	48.6	1.7	6.6	4.1	2.2
	Guayaquil	35.6	37.9	0.1	10.0	10.0	6.5
	Quito	39.3	35.1	0.2	10.6	9.7	5.1
	Total	37.2	37.7	0.3	10.0	9.4	5.6
Total	Cuenca	40.8	49.6	1.6	3.1	3.3	1.6
	Guayaquil	40.0	43.2	0.3	4.7	8.0	3.9
	Quito	47.4	37.4	0.3	4.8	7.4	2.8
	Total	43.0	41.4	0.4	4.6	7.4	3.3

Taken from Larrea, et al., 2006

Annex 5

Budget distribution for GRPE Project, January – June 2006

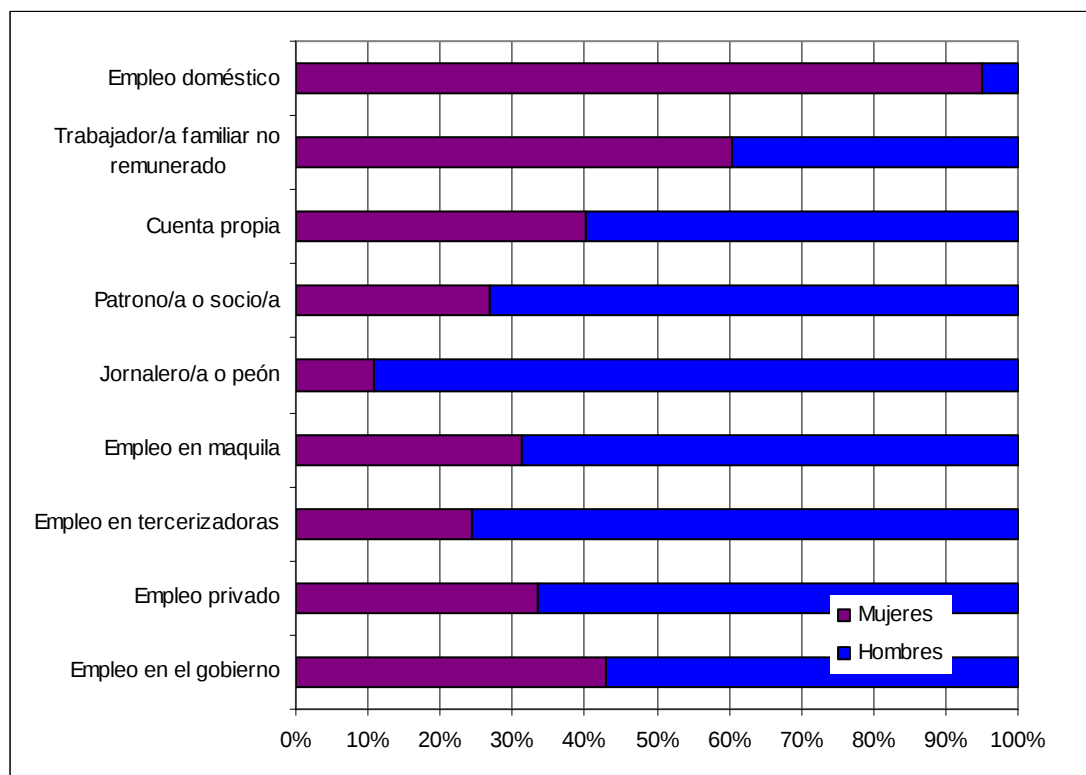
Line item	Budget	%
Activities	23,400	30.8%
Systematic documentation of the outcomes of activities related to Objective 1	11,300	
Study, "Employment and Gender in Ecuador: Situation, Policies and Outlook"	5,000	
Awareness-raising and training seminar on project topics related to equality for CNT members	2,000	
Strengthening of the Dialogue Group for Employment and Gender in Ecuador, through continuation of awareness-raising and training in issues related to the project.	1,100	
National workshop with domestic workers and representatives of indigenous women's organisations.	1,500	
Seminar to present the results of the project	2,500	
Missions to be carried out	7,000	9.2%
Miscellaneous	3,000	3.9%
Personnel	42,600	56.1%
National coordinator	28,600	
Secretary	14,000	
Total budgeted January-June 2006	76,000	100.0%

Source: Final GRPE Work Plan, January-June 2006

Prepared by the author

Annex 6

Occupied EAP by occupational category (percentage)



LEYENDA:

Domestic employment
 Unremunerated family labour
 Self-employed
 Owner/partner
 Day labourer
 Employed in *maquila*
 Employed by contractor
 Private employment
 Government employment

Women

Men

Source: CONAMU, www.conamu.gov.ec/estadísticas
 Prepared by the author

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