



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: 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 Brazil

Quick Facts

Country: Ecuador

Final Evaluation: August 2006

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Policy Integration

Evaluation Team: Martha Moncada, external evaluator

Project Start: May 2003

Project End: October 2006

Project Code: RLA/03/52/UKM

Donor: The United Kingdom (1,800,000 US\$, shared with Brazil)

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project's main objective was "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." Much of the project time frame was marked by serious social and political instability in the country. This was accompanied by structural weakness in the design and implementation of public policy for eradicating poverty and creating employment. Additionally, there were several project-design related aspects that made it difficult to achieve the planned outcomes and

objectives, which were to 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; and to provide technical support for at least two direct programmes 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.

Present situation of project

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 on carrying out various training and awareness-raising activities. Noteworthy outcomes include the establishment of a Gender and Youth Unit within the MTE, 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.

Main Findings & Conclusions

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 the National Council of Ecuadorian Women (Consejo Nacional de Mujeres de Ecuador, CONAMU) has been carrying out since 1998 as a result of the Beijing accords.

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.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Main recommendations and follow-up

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

1. A 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.

2. A 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.

3. A 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.

4. A 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.

The following outcomes of the project could serve as a basis for deepening; expanding and consolidating the progress made so far and increase prospects for sustainability:

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 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.

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.

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. This demonstrates the need to strengthen their capacity for negotiation and presenting proposals.

Important lessons learned

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 are reviewed to identify synergies and possible interconnections that could help optimise the projects and the overall technical assistance being provided.