



STRATEGIC NOTE 2023 - 2026
UN WOMEN ECUADOR

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1. Context and situation analysis

Ecuador's population increased from 15 million people in 2010 (year of the last population census) to 17.5 million in 2020, according to estimates by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), with women representing 50.5 per cent of the population. Urban areas show a higher representation of women (51 per cent), while in rural areas there are more men (50.4 per cent) than women¹.

According to the **Country Gender Equality Profile 2022**, the **gender inequality index**, that measures the disadvantages faced by women, has fallen from 0.425 in 2010 to 0.383 in 2016, and since then has remained unvaried².

The **COVID-19 health emergency generated severe human and economic impacts on Ecuadorian society**: income poverty and extreme poverty increased from 25 to 33 per cent and from 8.9 to 15.4 per cent, respectively, between December 2019 and December 2020³.

In 2021, the **multidimensional poverty rate** of rural women was 45 percentage points higher than the rate recorded for urban women, and 22 percentage points higher in the case of income poverty. The multidimensional poverty rate for Indigenous women, Montuvian and girls and adolescents reached 78.1 per cent, 57.3 per cent and 45.8 per cent respectively. Data suggests the persistence of **racial systemic discriminations**⁴, that can be accrued by sexual orientation. According to the latest **UPR**, the Office of the Ombudsman noted that there was **no up-to-date statistical information** that would allow appropriate decisions to be made regarding **discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons**⁵.

The current Government of Guillermo Lasso took office in May 2021, in a context of multidimensional crisis and with economic, social and environmental impacts aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This Government has engaged in **fiscal austerity measures**, working towards productive reactivation and labour reforms.

In **Annex 1: Common Country Assessment**, more details can be found

1.1 Women's education

In Ecuador, **significant progress has been made in access to education at different levels for both women and men**. However, there are still significant gaps that affect rural women, Indigenous women and Montuvian women, who have 2.4, 2.5 and 3.2 years of schooling less than the national average.

While there are important advances in improving young women's access to higher education, the CEDAW Committee has recognized the importance of **encouraging women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of study and career paths**, such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and information and communications technology (ICT), and eliminate discriminatory stereotypes that may deter girls and women from studying these disciplines (CEDAW, 2021).

¹ UN Women (2022) Ecuador - Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP).

² Ibid.

³ United Nations (2022). Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Ecuador, 2022

⁴ Un Women (2022) Ecuador - Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP).

⁵ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G22/468/22/PDF/G2246822.pdf?OpenElement>

1.2 Women's participation and representation in politics

One of the most important advances undertaken by the State to guarantee **equal representation in popularly elected positions** is through the reforms to the **Democracy Code approved in 2019**. The Code establishes that for the registration of multi-person and single-person candidacies, the minimum percentage at the top of lists will be 50 per cent at 2025. However, the election effectivity is still low: as of 2021, the percentage of women in the National Assembly is still 36 per cent. In the case of single-person positions of the highest authorities of the **decentralized autonomous governments** (GAD by its Spanish acronym), the percentage of women elected as Prefects does not reach 20 per cent, and the participation of women as mayors is less than 10 per cent ⁶.

It should be noted that although the Constitution of the Republic, in Article 116, establishes parity and alternation between men and women for multi-person elections; which is complied with in the formation of lists from political organizations, **the percentage of women at the top of the lists is less than 10 per cent**, which has an impact on a lower participation at the time of the designation of elected authorities⁷.

Due to the low participation of women, the **CEDAW has expressed its concern about the presence of obstacles** related to "the composition of lists, the definition of constituencies, the method of allocating seats and the lack of parity in single-member candidacies" (CEDAW, 2021).

To date, no woman has held the presidency of the Republic; and the only woman elected as Vice President, Rosalía Arteaga, was an emblematic case of political violence, because when the President at that moment was dismissed by the National Congress, the President of the Congress was appointed as Head of the Executive, instead of the elected Vice President as established in the Constitution (UN WOMEN, CGEP 2020b).⁸

Moreover, in Ecuador there are **high levels of political violence against women**. A recent study⁹ identifies that 66 per cent of women in politics mention that "they have spoken to her with airs of superiority or have named her with diminutives or words that minimize her", and 52 per cent indicate that "they have made her invisible or have made a low diffusion of her candidacy", among other expressions of violence that happen permanently. It should be noted that in 58 per cent of the cases, other political actors are the perpetrators of violence (2019), evidencing a structural problem. Political violence also extends to social networks where the use of stereotypes to attack women is recurrent, undermining the perception of their capacity and reducing their opportunities to access spaces of power¹⁰.

In the country a growing **presence and influence of anti-rights groups** and the anti-gender discourse has been identified as a negative factor that hinders women's rights and that should be addressed. Ecuador has also experienced significant **violence against women-human rights defenders**, together with **shrinking spaces for CSOs** and particularly for indigenous WROs¹¹.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ ONU MUJERES. (2020b). Estudio sobre la situación de las mujeres en Ecuador.

⁹ ONU MUJERES. (2019). Estudio violencia política contra las mujeres en Ecuador.

¹⁰ ONU MUJERES. (2020c). *Estudio cualitativo y cuantitativo sobre violencia política contra las mujeres en Ecuador en redes sociales*.

11 <https://amazonfrontlines.org/es/chronicles/informe-expone-amenazas-contra-defensores-de-derechos-humanos-en-ecuador/>

1.3 Women's economic autonomy

The **Ecuadorian labour market presents structural problems that were aggravated by the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic**. Ecuador has a weak capacity for the creation of adequate employment (defined as a salary equal to or greater than the basic wage and with affiliation to some form of social security): data for December 2021 show that only 30.4 per cent of economically active people are adequately employed, with significant gaps between men and women and between workers in urban and rural areas¹²
¹³.

The time spent by women in care work affects the patterns of participation of care workers in the labour market and this, in turn, on their labour income and their possibilities of affiliation to social security. The **unequal distribution of care work translates into women time poverty and largely explains the gender gap in labour market insertion**. Due to traditional gender roles, sexist beliefs and discriminatory practices, the **differences of care work by sex are wide**. Women, in Ecuador, spend about 31:49 hours per week (34:33 for rural women and 36:24 for Indigenous women) on unpaid care work versus about nine hours for men, for a ratio of roughly three and a half to one¹⁴. Ecuador would need to update data on time use as the latest national survey was undertaken in 2012, and estimates could be outdated.

Although there is the **opportunity of a gender bonus**, as 52 per cent of working-age people are women, compared to 48 per cent who are men, when we look at overall labour participation, only 54.5 per cent of working-age women are performing or looking for paid work, compared to 78.6 per cent of men.

Gender gaps in the labour market persist, though the percentage of employed women with higher education stands at 24.3 per cent (6.7 percentage points higher than men). The higher educational background that women have is not reflected in the main labour indicators: according to data from 2019, men with higher education earned 1.7 times more than women with the same educational level, and this value has not changed in the last 10 years¹⁵.

Women have higher unemployment rates than men, from December 2019 to the same month of 2020 almost 100,000 people have left their employment, of which 94 per cent were women. The latter as a consequence of the impact of the pandemic (STPE, PNDA, 2021).

Although there are financial inclusion programs, the **gender gap in access to credit** is evident: 24 per cent of men obtain credits, while for women the percentage is 18 per cent¹⁶. In addition, the credit requirements that women in general and rural women in agricultural credit and microcredit, in particular, must meet are difficult to comply with¹⁷.

Another challenge is the **integration of the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population**, which, if incorporated into the formal labour market and in positions in line with their training, could contribute to

¹² INEC. (2022a). Encuesta Nacional de Empleo, Desempleo y Subempleo (ENEMDU) - Indicadores Laborales. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos.

¹³ United Nations (2022). Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Ecuador, 2022.

14 Encuesta Específica de Uso del Tiempo – EUT 2012
https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/documentos/web-inec/Uso_Tiempo/Presentacion_%20Principales_Resultados.pdf

¹⁵ Meneses, K. Córdova, G. y Aguirre, K. (2021). Lo más destacado y sobresaliente que caracteriza al mercado laboral ecuatoriano en siete hechos estilizados. Revista Economía y Política, núm. 33, 1-34. Universidad de Cuenca.

¹⁶ CNME. (2020). Informe sombra ampliado al Comité de la CEDAW. Coalición Nacional de Mujeres del Ecuador.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the economy with an increase of up to 2 per cent of GDP (World Bank, 2020). To achieve this, it is necessary to regularize migration, adjust regulations and their corresponding dissemination with the private sector and the recognition of their academic degrees and qualifications, as well as the implementation of mechanisms to **combat xenophobia, discrimination and labour exploitation**.¹⁸

Social security coverage is lower for women than for men, but within this first group, Indigenous women and young women are in a situation of greater vulnerability with lower coverage. The challenge is more complex if we consider the high level of informality that characterizes the Ecuadorian labour market, which affects mostly women (52.8 per cent) compared to men (49.4 per cent) and within the **agricultural sector where 85.1 per cent of women work in informal conditions**¹⁹.

1.4 Ending Violence Against Women & Girls

The 2019 National Survey on Family Relations and Gender Violence against Women (ENVIGMU by its Spanish acronym) reveals that 64.9 per cent of **women over the age of 15 suffered some type of violence in their lifetime**. The same instrument identifies that between 80 and 98 per cent of women did not report violence, which highlights the State's challenge to improve access to and trust in the judicial system. From an intersectional perspective, a higher prevalence of violence is observed in the case of Afro-Ecuadorian and Indigenous women.

The 2019 ENVIGMU also shows that **94.3 per cent of women victims of violence do not report**, with psychological and sexual violence being the least reported by type; and those that occur in the educational sector the least reported by area. Among the reasons for not reporting, the most frequent reasons are "I thought it was useless", "I did not know how to do it", "I felt embarrassment" and "I do not trust the authorities"²⁰.

For its part, **between 2014 and 2022, 1,625 victims of intentional homicides of women**, of whom in 585 cases a preliminary investigation has been initiated for the alleged crime of femicide or an enforceable sentence is registered for this same crime., 2021 was a year in which the security worsened and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) violence under lock-down increased. Likewise, in 2021, 398 daily emergencies due to domestic violence were recorded.

The State registered an important normative advance with the issuance of the **Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women** of 2018. This norm created a comprehensive national system to prevent and eradicate violence against women, integrated by different public sector agencies and established a series of measures for comprehensive care organized in four axes: prevention, care, protection and reparation of victims.

In the 2019 ENVIGMU, information on **gynaecological-obstetric violence** is collected for the first time, showing that 48 out of every 100 women have suffered it at some point in their lives, at the national level, and reached 55 out of every 100 women in rural areas, and 70 out of every 100 in Indigenous women (INEC, 2019).

The **number of violent deaths of women** has remained relatively unchanged between 2015 and 2017, with the most critical years being 2017 and 2021. In 2021 the number of femicides typified was 67, while 160

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Un Women (2022) Ecuador - Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP).

²⁰ INEC. (2019). Encuesta Nacional sobre Relaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género. Obtenido de Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos: https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/documentos/web-inec/Estadisticas_Sociales/Violencia_de_genero_2019/Principales%20resultados%20ENVIGMU%202019.pdf

deaths were typified as other violent deaths. The Aldea Foundation, for the same year, reports a total of 197 femicides in that year.

Additionally, in order to obtain a single and official statistical data on femicide, in July 2017, the **Technical Subcommittee for the Validation of Femicide Cases** was formed, for the collection, systematization and cross-checking of information from the databases of the Ministry of Government, the Attorney General's Office and the Judiciary Council, through an inter-institutional technical team made up of these institutions as well as INEC, the Secretariat of Human Rights, and the National Directorate of Crimes against Life, Violent Deaths, Disappearances, Extortion and Kidnappings of the National Police (DINASED by its Spanish acronym), with the participation of the National Council for Gender Equality as an invited institution.

The difference between the official data (which is generated based on the judge's classification) and the one of the Aldea Foundation reflects the **need to advance in the standardization of information and in the creation and maintenance of information systems** that allow for the compilation of data for decision making in public policies and territorial actions, but it also highlights the need to work on training processes that include training and sensitization of all actors involved in the justice system to investigate and qualify a suspected femicide and its respective sanction, including police officers, prosecutors, judges and magistrates.

There are other types or subtypes of violence that deserve attention such as the case of **so-called street harassment**. In a study called "Current situation of the protection of children and adolescents against violence in Ecuador", published by World Vision (2022), it is stated that this problem was prioritized by a group of adolescent boys, and that, in the Portoviejo Area Program, was a problem analysed by girls and adolescents in a situation of human mobility and by local girls and adolescents, in which they expressed that they do not feel safe in public spaces, as they are exposed to harassment, which causes them insecurity, discomfort, distrust and fear that this harassment may turn into sexual and physical abuse or rape.²¹ Thus, according to UN Women's Safe Cities for Women and Girls program, in Cuenca 90% of women report having experienced sexual harassment in the public space (2018).

1.5 Women, Peace and Security

Ecuador is a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficking of women and girls for sexual and labour exploitation (CEDAW, 2021). The sustained outflow of Ecuadorian people abroad since 2015 is related to lack of opportunities and increased poverty, and places women at risk of exploitation. In the case of people who migrate to Ecuador in search of better living conditions, it is usually related to lower payment for their work and the risk of labour and sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, information about women and girls in situation of human mobility is scarce.

According to the TIP Report 2020, **the victims most often identified for sexual purposes are Ecuadorian women and adolescent girls, followed by Venezuelan, Colombian and Peruvian migrants**, with the provinces of El Oro, Guayas, Manabí, Los Ríos, Carchi, Esmeraldas, Loja and Sucumbíos having the highest incidence of the crime. Regarding the profile of the victims, they come from highly vulnerable contexts: high levels of poverty, unemployment, social conflict, naturalization of crime, complex and irregular migratory situation, gender violence or job insecurity. The mixed migratory flows of the Venezuelan population generated conditions of special vulnerability to human trafficking.²²

²¹ Un Women (2022) Ecuador - Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP).

²² United Nations (2022). Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Ecuador, 2022.

Ecuador is home to a **significant number of persons in human mobility situation**, mainly Venezuelans (513,903) and to a lesser extent Colombians (93,237), which have been generated both by the condition of neighbouring countries and by flows of people in need of international protection (PNPI). Among the main problems identified for the immigrant population in Ecuador are access to documentation, housing, social services and employment. In addition, a particular and highly relevant problem is the discrimination suffered by the population due to their condition of human mobility, manifesting **events of xenophobia**, which is experienced in a differentiated manner between men and women. In general, xenophobia limits the possibility of social inclusion; however, in the case of women, it is expressed in episodes of harassment linked to gender violence, increasing their vulnerability (World Vision, 2022)²³.

Refugee and migrant women and girls are disproportionately exposed to the risk of gender-based violence, including survival sex, psychological, patrimonial and sexual violence. 9 out of 10 women in human mobility experienced violence prior to COVID-19. In the context of the pandemic, the situation is aggravated by the reduced response of national protection systems. This increase is also mainly due to irregular migration status, as it restricts their access to basic rights, especially in relation to sexual and reproductive health and their ability to report gender-based violence, in addition to the risks of sexual and labour exploitation they face.

Additionally, the **closing of borders** and use of illegal crossings have increased the risk for women of becoming victims of smuggling and trafficking networks for sexual exploitation, as well as the risk of experiencing situations of gender-based violence during the migratory route.

Ecuador has, for decades, suffered from the **negative effects of the internal conflict in Colombia**. The northern regions have experienced the international flows of refugees, and the internationalization of armed groups that often move across a porous border. The presence of criminal groups has increased risks for local communities and eroded the rule of law.

During recent years, Ecuador has experienced important **socio-political uprisings that caused extensive damages to the economy and dramatic human losses mainly due to police use of the force**. The most notable events occurred during 2019 with protests and riots against austerity measures including the cancellation of fuel subsidies, and in 2022 with protests against the economic policies established by President Guillermo Lasso and triggered by increasing fuel and food prices. Initiated by and primarily attended by Indigenous activists, in particular the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), the protests have since been joined by students and workers who have also been affected by the price increases. Women and women's organizations actively participated in the social movements during both events, in logistics, organization and feeding, but also leading the movements, negotiations and peacekeeping.

According to data from the Ministry of Government, between 2020 and 2021 the rates of **violence increased by 80% and the homicide rate doubled**, from 7.77 to 13.95 per hundred thousand inhabitants. In the same period, the country faced violent disturbances in various prisons in the country that cost the lives of more than 400 people. According to the authorities, these unpublished data on violence reflect an increase in the **presence and incidence of transnational organized crime** in the country. According to national and international experts, Ecuador has gone from being a transit corridor for drug trafficking to a **context that combines transit, production and consumption, increasing and consolidating the presence of international cartels**, promoting contract killings, money laundering assets, corruption and the risk of

²³ Un Women (2022) Ecuador - Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP).

penetration into the state apparatus and social organizations by criminal organizations²⁴. Violence, street territorial fights among bands and with the police directly affect social relations in the localities, involving women being or not part of the conflicts, increasing gender-based violence in communities, groups and households. There is no official systematic data of the consequences of social conflicts on women, however, UN has gathered information of women being involuntary related and involved in illegal economies and sexual exploitation in conflictive territories. Indirect affectations include closing of local schools and health public services, impacting in care responsibilities of women living in violent neighbourhoods.

Ecuador will be a member of the Security Council in 2023 and 2024, and the Country has identified the Women Peace and Security agenda as one of their priorities for their time in the Security Council, providing a unique opportunity to make incidence at the highest international level.

1.6 UN Women's comparative strengths

The vast majority (**85.7 per cent**) of people who responded to the perception survey conducted as part of the Mid-Term Review (MTR), think that **UN Women's interventions, in 2019 and 2020, were relevant to improving the situation of women and girls in Ecuador**. This reflects positively on the good positioning of the entity and its potential to build on a strong network of alliances and partnerships.²⁵

At the regional level, UN Women Ecuador Country Office (ECO) is **recognized as a reference for the development of the Safe Cities Program, as a "pioneer" on the women and climate change agenda**, and for its progress on issues related to the monitoring of **gender-sensitive budgets** (budget trackers) and social protection policy.

ECO has made an accelerated transition from an office focused on technical assistance, normative assistance and advocacy, to an office with a **diversified and expanding programmatic portfolio**.

During the period 2019-2021, UN Women's relevance has increased based on strong relationships with the national government and expanding its partnerships with the other UN System agencies in Ecuador, local governments, support to civil society organizations and a notable growth in relations with the private sector, supported by the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

UNDAF joint planning, UN Women's co-leadership in the Prosperity pillar (UNDAF Outcome 3), and the joint programme modality have been **instrumental and strategic in strengthening the entity's positioning in Ecuador**, and a similar approach should be used for its positioning in the new UNSDCF.

Particularly successful has been the positioning of UN Women within the UN System, and the way in which **joint programmes (JP) have become the main programmatic delivery mechanism, representing 44 per cent of the non-core budget in 2020/2021**. According to the Quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR), this modality will continue to increase in relevance and constitutes for UN Women a primary bet for the fulfilment of its mandate.

Growth through inter-agency programmes has allowed UN Women to position itself in the northern border area and to make **inroads in issues of utmost importance in the country's agenda: human mobility and sustainable development** (women and climate change).

According to its partners, **UN Women's comparative advantage** in Ecuador lies on three elements:

²⁴ Common Country Analysis (CCA) for Ecuador, 2022.

²⁵ UN Women Ecuador, 2022. Resource Mobilization Strategy 2022 - 2026.

- Its ability to support normative changes that promote gender equality (81.6 per cent of people consider it important),
- The implementation of programs and projects for the empowerment of women and girls (77.5 per cent of people consider it important),
- The UN's coordination mandate for gender equality and women's empowerment (71.4 per cent of people consider it important, and among them 38.7 per cent consider it the most important thing the organization does).

ECO has maintained an important **normative role at the national level**, supporting the national implementation of the ILO Convention 189, the Ratification of ILO Convention 190, the Recommendations of the CSW Committee, and the observance of the Belem do Pará Convention, and has supported the **accompaniment of Ecuador in intergovernmental processes** including the CEDAW, SDGs, and other Regional Conferences).

ECO's capacity and leadership in coordination within the UN System is strongly acknowledged. The coordination mandate has allowed ECO to enter less consolidated areas in the Office (humanitarian, peacebuilding, climate change), in the growing participation and leadership in joint programmes and in the appreciation of its peers for its important role within the **Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM)**.

At the operational level, the agency has consolidated notable experience on the areas of Eradication of Violence against Women and Girls (Safe Cities and Spotlight Initiative), in the agenda of women peace and security and humanitarian action, working with emphasis on the population in conditions of human mobility, and in the area, little explored organizationally, related to the agenda of women in sustainable development processes and mitigation or adaptation to climate change (Women and Climate Change)²⁶.

UN Women's programmatic performance has an emphasis on putting into practice the principle of "**leaving no woman behind**", where intersectionality plays a crucial role in Ecuador and give birth to overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusions ECO will promote interventions that focus on: women in conditions of human mobility, women survivors of gender-based violence or at risk of rights violations, rural women, women that are not participating the labour market, and women belonging to Indigenous communities. This approach is a key factor for the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and will have to be maintained in the next programming phase²⁷.

1.7. Consultation Process

The participatory process to **design the Strategic Note builds on the broad consultations led by the UN System in Ecuador to prepare the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the UNSDCF**, where hundreds of partners, representing different sectors, were involved, including the private sector, civil society and governmental institutions. In 2022, broad national consultations were undertaken to develop and share the results of the first **Country Gender Equality Profile**, with a significant participation of WROs, Indigenous, Afro, Montuvian organizations and the private sector.

²⁶ UN Women (2020) Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Note 2019-2022.

²⁷ Ibid.

In addition, UN Women has undertaken a **Country Portfolio Evaluation**, a comprehensive process that involved **104 persons** (85 women and 19 men) that were consulted on how to improve the CO next programmatic survey. The SN also took advantage from a **perception survey** developed (49 respondents), applied in 2020 to partners, that shed lights on critical elements such as the comparative advantage of UN Women in Ecuador, partnerships, the positioning of the entity and knowledge management.

2. Lessons learned

During the implementation of the Strategic Note 2019-2022, several lessons learned, good practices and innovations were identified and may be useful to partners and other UN Women offices at the global level, which have been included in the Final Country Portfolio Evaluation Report of the UN Women office in Ecuador²⁸ and are listed below:

Lesson Learned 1. The design of interventions for the eradication of violence against women and girls in situations of human mobility with a **comprehensive approach focused not only on the target groups, but also on the host communities**, is essential for long-term work to eradicate stereotypes, practices and attitudes of rejection or discrimination²⁹. Bases on this finding the new programme will, according to resource mobilized, maintain a programmatic approach based on the triple nexus, where humanitarian response is connected to peacebuilding in host communities, to avoid discrimination and ensure the inclusiveness of local communities.

Lesson Learned 2. The Final Evaluation of the previous SN recognizes that “efforts have been made by UN Women ECO to establish capacities and tools that guarantee sustainability as well as national ownership in government partners, but **progresses have been undermined by the high turnover of officials** as well as by the political will of the authorities”³⁰. **Women in the civil service** often come from civil society organizations and networks working for women's rights or the feminist movement. In some cases, they have a vision of "survival" given the high turnover of people in high-level civil service, and they care about the importance of "not losing the feminist vision" for which technical support and the dissemination of successful experiences is extremely important³¹. UN Women will maintain a capacity building approach towards national and local public institutions, to ensure that sustainability of results is embedded in both institutional and civil society partners.

Lesson Learned 3. Our past experience also suggests that the national appropriation of the **results have concentrated mainly in large cities**, while in peri-urban and rural areas certain advances on sustainability are identified, on a smaller scale and with less evident progress, this is the reason why in the geographical scope of the SN, UN Women is now focusing on a larger number of small cities and in more territories.

Lesson Learned 4. ECO has made a survey of lessons learned for programmatic improvement, has systematized its annual reports and recommendations of the various evaluations to make decisions on programmatic design and operational implementation, as has been the case of the findings and recommendations of the “Protective Communities” Project, which have been useful for the “Caminando” Project, still under implementation. “UN Women is a **dynamic learning organization** that could benefit

²⁸ UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

²⁹ UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

³⁰ UN Women Ecuador, 2022. Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report.

³¹ UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

from the regular participation and involvement of all staff, consultants and implementing partners in this type of reflection, beyond accountability mechanisms and processes for the preparation of its reports”³². To ensure that knowledge management and corporate learning has positive spill over effects both internally and with external partners, ECO has designed and is implementing a comprehensive knowledge management strategy, whose objective is to improve the quality of UN Women’s knowledge products and broadening, as well as diversifying, the audience.

Lesson Learned 5. The extensive growth of the office's programmatic portfolio and the consequent expansion of work in the field has brought challenges on the way the ECO team is organized to respond to needs internally and with its implementing partners. **Having a coherent, coordinated and efficient response** requires both strategic and operational definitions that enable an excellent coordination of the internal team, implementing partners and other stakeholders. These stakeholders include other UN agencies, funds and programs, other international cooperation actors, the regional office and UN Women headquarters, relevant actors in the territory, among others. This learning arises from the coordinated efforts of field work carried out in the framework of initiatives such as Pro-Amazon, Spotlight and “Caminando” and is linked to the recommendation of develop strategies, protocols and/or management models that set the guidelines for coordination and resource mobilization for the implementation of initiatives in the territory³³.

Lesson Learned 6. The work carried out **on climate change resilience issues has been an important opportunity for resource mobilization** and for the expansion of the office's partnerships, in line with the guidelines of the UN System and other cooperation actors the work in this area represents an important opportunity for the next SN. In the context of the challenges involved in resource mobilization in a middle-income country, this constitutes an important lesson learned for the future. This lesson learned is linked to the recommendations to deepen this work, in partnership with other actors, as well as the recommendation to strengthen the capacities of the office on this issue³⁴.

Lesson Learned 7. The multiple political, economic and health crises affecting Ecuador have deepened the gaps in the exercise of women's and girls' rights, as well as slowed progress in their empowerment, there is a growing consensus on the relevance of UN Women's mandate and its mainstreaming into the work of the UN System, the state and other development and humanitarian actors. In this scenario, the widespread demand for technical assistance from UN Women to **incorporate gender mainstreaming into interventions is an important opportunity for the next SN**, the scope of which should be defined in close alignment with resource mobilization and partnership building strategies³⁵.

As for **innovations**, the adaptation of training programs to an online work methodology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the confinement measures, but also as a measure to handle the frequent changes of civil servants, officials and technicians, who are the target of participants in ECO's strengthening actions and who permanently demand this type of support³⁶.

32 UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

33 UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

34 UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

35 UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

36 Ibid.

In addition, innovative solutions were achieved in the area of **sustainable development and climate change**. This opens up a whole spectrum of opportunities to adapt the Programmatic Portfolio to a changing context in which the effects of climate change are being felt more strongly and affecting the fulfilment of women's and girls' rights, and also, to promote the resource mobilization on new and broader basis and possibilities.

As a **good practice and innovation** in project design, it should be noted that the Spotlight initiative has explicitly and clearly incorporated **the intersectional approach**, either transversally throughout its plan or through a specific section (IX "Intersectional approach") that includes a matrix disaggregated by at-risk group, the challenges for their inclusion and the programmatic approach for their inclusion.

3. Proposed programmes

3.1. Alignment with the UNSDCF, national legislation and international conventions

The Strategic Note is fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2026 (**Annex 2. UNSDCF**). The UNSDCF negotiated between the parties is structured around four outcomes: a) Social protection and quality social services; b) Climate management and climate action; c) Socioeconomic equality and sustainable productive transformation; and d) Rule of law, robust institutions and social cohesion. Three out of four outcomes' narrative have explicit references to gender equality.

UN Women Strategic Note is based on: a) the Ecuadorian Constitution and national legislation, b) the National Development Plan 2021-2025³⁷, c) the body of international instruments ratified by the State of Ecuador³⁸, as well as other relevant international commitments subscribed within the 2030 Agenda (SDGs), the Beijing Platform for Action, the Commission on the Status of Women³⁹ agreed conclusions, and the Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030⁴⁰.

Although the UNSDCF does not include a specific gender outcome, the gender approach has been mainstreamed. The SDGs constitute the fundamental range on which its monitoring matrix and monitoring indicators are articulated. Additionally, the UNSDCF includes a focus on leaving no one behind (LNOB) that has been also adopted in this document.

³⁷ Plan de Creación de Oportunidades 2021-2025 de Ecuador
<https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/planes/plan-de-creacion-de-oportunidades-2021-2025-de-ecuador>

³⁸ Ratification Status for State of Ecuador includes: CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CAT - Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, CMW - International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, CESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Source: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=53&Lang=EN

³⁹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/outcomes>

⁴⁰ <https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/14/en/documents/montevideo-strategy-implementation-regional-gender-agenda-within-sustainable-development>

3.2. Outcomes of the UNSDCF prioritized in the Strategic Note 2023-2026 and alignment with UN Women Strategic Plan

The work of ECO for the period 2023-2026 will be aligned with **two (2) Outcomes of the UNSDCF** that are directly used as Outcomes of UN Women’s Strategic Note (Table 1).

Based on the existing linkages between the agendas of peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian action, and the diagnosis of the situation of gender equality in Ecuador, during the period 2023-2026, in alignment with the Strategic Plan (SP) 2022-2025, the Strategic Note of ECO will support the efforts of the country to achieve measurable results in terms of:

- SP Impact 1. Governance and participation in public life (G&PPL).
- SP Impact 2. Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE).
- SP Impact 3. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)
- SP Impact 4. Women peace and security, Humanitarian & Disaster Risk Reduction (WPSH&DRR).

Table 1. UNSDCF and SN outcomes, alignment with UN Women Strategic Plan and Signature Interventions.

UNSDCF and UN Women Outcomes	UN Women Strategic Plan	UN Women potential Signature Interventions
UNSDCF Outcome 3 UN Women SN Outcome 1. In 2026, the State and society have reduced socioeconomic inequalities and have promoted sustainable productive transformation with added value, the generation of livelihoods and decent work, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities, and access for women and men to resources	Impact 2: Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE). Women have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy	Decent Work and Entrepreneurship Gender Responsive Budgeting and Financing Transforming Care Economy Women’s Climate Action and Green/Blue Economies
UNSDCF Outcome 4 UN Women SN Outcome 2. In 2026, the State improves public management and increases the protection and guarantee of rights, gender equality and social cohesion, while reducing threats to human security and promoting the eradication of all forms of violence.	Impact 1: Governance & Participation in Public Life (G&PPL). Women fully and equally participate in leadership and decision-making and women and girls benefit from gender-responsive governance Impact 3: Ending Violence Against Women (EVAW). All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence	Women’s Equal Participation in Decision Making and Institutions Prevention and Response of Violence against Women

3.4. Leave no one behind (LNOB)

ECO is committed to leave no woman behind. The Theory of Change has adopted the principle of prioritizing women who, historically, have been most excluded from development dividends, and affirms a commitment to direct its investment and institutional efforts to narrow existing gaps.

According to the context analysis, our office will prioritize interventions that will focus on initiatives that engage the following population groups:

- **Women survivors of VAWG.** UN Women will build on its solid experience in ensuring safe public spaces for women and girls, in partnership with local and municipal governments. ECO will also promote access to justice, protection and integrated services for survivors of violence, building on the positive results of the Spotlight Initiative, and will further invest in improving the access to safe houses and services for survivors of violence, women in human mobility situation, and women at risk of sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
- **Indigenous women:** ECO has built a considerable experience in working with Indigenous communities. The office has invested to increase Indigenous women political participation and collective capacities to advocate in public decision-making processes, including in critical political moments, such during protests and strikes. Indigenous women have also led local processes to build resilience conditions to face the adverse impact of climate change and to develop sustainable development economic initiatives.
- **Rural women** will play a prominent role in UN Women's agenda for enhanced women's economic autonomy. UN Women is committed to ensure that more rural women have access to livelihoods and productive resources, within the framework of the sustainable production and consumption process, adaptation to climate change. ECO will also make efforts to increase access to integrated protection services in rural areas, including access to justice, contributing to reduce the gap of service provision between urban and rural areas.
- **Women that are not participating the labour market:** Gaps in existing care services have been identified as a critical element to increase women access to the labour market. To increase opportunities for women that are not active in the labour market, UN Women will seek to increase the social recognition of the value of care work, and promote a fairer redistribution of unpaid care work assumed by women. UN Women will work with public and private partners to increase the access and exercise of economic and labour rights, while, at macroeconomic level, ECO will lobby for increased fiscal resources and public and private financing aimed at reducing gender gaps, empowering women and increasing social investment with emphasis on the care system.
- **Women and girls in human mobility:** since 2018 Ecuador has become the country receiving the highest per capita number of refugees in LAC. Women in mobility account for half of the migrant communities that are committed to stay in the Ecuadorian territory. During the journey and in their arrival most of these women, often travelling with their children, lose their resources and confront risks of violence, sexual exploitation, poverty and double discrimination. They face higher violence rates than national women, labour and street harassment and higher informality and unemployment. Moreover, migrant crisis has become a structural phenomenon and an important factor relating conflict and social violence. It is key to work with women and men in mobility and host population, to provide women with better opportunities, prevent violence and build more peaceful and integrated communities.

Although progresses have been done, monitoring the implementation of the LNOB principle will face difficulties because of the lack of national surveys and instruments geared to analysing gender equality data intersected with the identified prioritized populations. This factor affects the Monitoring system of the SN, presented in **Annex 6. DRF and OEEF Indicators**.

3.5. Working along the Humanitarian-Development and Peace Nexus

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions. Ecuador is a **country exposed to multiple threats of natural and anthropic origin**. The last two United Nations Cooperation Frameworks were affected by emergencies that led the UN System to review its priorities and channel regular resources to meet humanitarian needs. These instruments, in turn, included among their priorities joint products to strengthen national capacities for risk management and response preparedness. The **earthquake** of April 16, 2016 in Manabí and Esmeraldas prompted the activation of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). In 2020, the **COVID-19 pandemic** had a significant impact on people's health and living conditions, and in response to the request of the national government, the HCT was activated, and a Humanitarian Response Plan was developed.

Ecuador is also part of the **Response for Venezuela (R4V)**, as Ecuador represents one of the countries of the region that receives the highest number of migrant and asylum seekers from Venezuela (more than 500, 000)⁴¹.

Ecuador has, for decades, suffered from the **negative effects of the internal conflict in Colombia**. The northern regions have experienced the international flows of refugees, and the internationalization of armed groups that often move across a porous border. The presence of criminal groups has increased risks for local communities, and eroded the rule of law.

During recent years, Ecuador has experienced important **social-political uprisings** that caused extensive damages to the economy and dramatic human losses. Additionally, **criminal activities**, especially in Guayaquil, have shaken local communities and homicides linked to gangs are more and more common.

These experiences have deeply shaped the way in which UN Women and its partners operate in the country. Progressively, **ECO has learned how to move and program activities along the Humanitarian-Development and Peace Nexus (HDP-Nexus)**.

The ToC takes stock of past experiences. Our **HDP-Nexus approach** encompasses efforts to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises or conflicts, and to bridge the silos of segmented interventions in protracted crisis and humanitarian situations. The HDP-Nexus approach is embedded in both our Outcomes and translates in concrete strategic actions within the frame of each Output.

3.6. Theory of Change

The theory of change (ToC) of this Strategic Note (SN) is fully aligned with the ToC established by the UNSDCF. The SN is **aligned to two (2) Outcomes of the UNSDCF** within the framework of the areas of work of a) Socioeconomic equality and sustainable productive transformation (Outcome 3 of the UNSDCF); b) Rule of law, robust institutions and social cohesion (Outcome 4 of the UNSDCF).

⁴¹ <https://www.r4v.info/>

The ToC describes a) the objective that inspires the work of UN Women in Ecuador, b) the main gender gaps that derive from the context analysis, c) the conditions for change, e) the gender equality outcomes, and f) the drivers of change. An illustration that summarizes the core elements of ToC, and its linkage to the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, is presented in **Illustration 1**.

Main gender gaps that the Strategic Note will support to address are:

- **Rural-urban divide, accrued by gender:** socio-economic indicators systematically indicate that inequality in Ecuador is determined by geographic variables. Rural women and girls are more likely to have lower income, to live in poverty and extreme poverty, as well as to have limited access to social and protection services.
- **Racism and xenophobia intersecting with gender discrimination:** Indigenous, Afro-descendent and Montuvian women have suffered from historic and systematic discrimination mechanisms that have translated into lower level of socio-economic development, lower degree of education, and more limited access to essential services. Debate on racism and how gender discrimination intersects with racial discrimination and xenophobia is a tabu in our society, a tabu that must be faced if we want to overcome a key structural determinant of inequalities. Discrimination can be enhanced for women because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Economic inequality based on gender:** female labour force concentrates in low-skilled, and low-income economic activities including part-time and informal work. Due to a lack of financing and of a supportive environment for women, a large number of Ecuadorian women are discouraged from setting off their own business.
- Women and girls in Ecuador continue to experience various forms of violence due to the **entrenched discriminatory social norms and beliefs** that affect their physical, economic and political autonomy. Sexist social norms underly and justify different forms of VAWG and contribute to maintain rigid gender roles, that prevent women from participating on equal footing in the economy and in politics.
- **High prevalence of VAWG.** 64.9 per cent of Ecuadorian women over the age of 15 have suffered some type of violence in their lifetime. VAWG is seldom denounced, and high levels of impunity persist. VAWG high prevalence has a dramatic impact on women and girls' wellbeing, psychological integrity and hinders their potential to fulfil their personal purposes.
- **Women are underrepresented in decision-making processes and in politics.** Despite the reforms to the Democracy Code in 2020, there is a large margin to improve women equal participation across political parties, the private sector, public sectors and in labour movements.
- **Women and girls in human mobility situation** are more likely to be in a situation of social exclusion and be in an accrued risk of sexual and labour exploitation.

The overarching objective of our theory of change towards equality is to:

Contribute to gender equality in Ecuador and empower women and girls to fully enjoy their human rights, including those who are in a situation of greater exclusion.

The Strategic Note is committed to deliver, in a four-year period, on two Outcomes:

- **Outcome 1.** In 2026, the State and society have reduced socioeconomic inequalities and have promoted sustainable productive transformation with added value, the generation of livelihoods

and decent work, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities, and access for women and men to resources

- **Outcome 2.** In 2026, the State improves public management and increases the protection and guarantee of rights, gender equality and social cohesion, while reducing threats to human security and promoting the eradication of all forms of violence.

Drivers of change

To achieve the above-mentioned outcomes, UN Women's will make use of its **triple mandate**, and will leverage the following drivers of change:

- **Strengthening normative frameworks, and gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions:** ECO will provide technical support to Ecuador to strengthen the development of norms and standards on GEWE in line with intergovernmental processes⁴². UN Women will also continue to provide technical and policy advisory support to inform standard-setting and gender mainstreaming in sectoral norms and standards. In Ecuador, this support includes, in alliance with OHCHR and other UN Agencies, producing evidence and advocacy materials to support the implementation of CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also includes facilitating dialogue among governments, civil society organizations, including women's and youth organizations, and other relevant stakeholders in the context of intergovernmental processes and for enhanced accountability.
- **UN Coordination for gender equality:** Under the leadership of the RCO, and the umbrella of UNSDCF Outcome Groups, UN Women leads, coordinates and promotes the accountability of the UN system for GEWE across sectors, to this end, UN Women will contribute to the UN System in supporting the periodic UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard and the consistent use of Gender Equality Marker (GEM). Gender coordination among agencies will be articulated by the UNCT Gender Task Force (GTF, that will be led or co-led by UN Women). ECO will play a catalytic role in the Humanitarian Country Team on Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA), strengthening a gender-sensitive humanitarian response across all actors integrating the HCTs, leading the subgroup of macro fiscal and financing within the Socioeconomic Equality UNSDCF effect and the subgroup of Violence within the Social protection effect; and participating in the Protection Cluster.
- **Women's voice, leadership, and agency:** UN Women will facilitate the expression of women's voice and agency in decision-making at all levels, sectors and contexts. Key participation platforms and spaces for the successful implementation of the Proposed Program are: a) women candidates participating in local election in 2023, b) women and young people advocacy for equal economic rights and to shift discriminatory social norms affect women's equal participation in the economy, c) accountability mechanisms for social services including EAWG services, d) participatory accountability mechanisms on international commitments and conventions.
- **Production, analysis and use of gender statistics, sex-disaggregated data, and knowledge:** in partnership with the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC, for its acronym in Spanish), ECO will invest in the generation of data and empirical evidence to support decision-making based

⁴² Including at the Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council, and the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

on reliable information. UN Women is committed to generating quality knowledge, consistent with its mandate, and promoting its access among partners and strategic allies. Data limitations exist to monitor gender equality using an intersectional approach, therefore hindering the office monitoring possibilities to report on the LNOB principle as desired.

- **Financing for gender equality:** UN Women will promote financial exercises, in alliance with national institutions and the international community, to assess the financial gaps that undermine the progress towards GEWE, according to the 2030 Agenda and the public budget allocation of fiscal resources for gender equality. Along with other agencies, UN Women will advocate and technically support the government to dedicate increasing resources for gender equality, end violence, social protection and care. UN Women will also work with stakeholders to ensure that women's, especially those representing the most marginalized, are adequately resourced. Within the UN System, UN Women will promote the consistent use of Gender Equality Marker (GEM).
- **Positive social norms, including by engaging men and boys:** Building on its past experiences, ECO will work across sectors to engage men and boys as allies for GEWE, through advocacy campaigns, grass-root initiatives, and Partnership Agreements (PA or Grants) designed to promote respectful, equitable and non-violent relationships, reduce acceptance of all forms of VAWG, and promote men's involvement in responsible parenthood and shared responsibility in care work.

Narrative of the theory of change

If the State and society have reduced socioeconomic inequalities and have promoted sustainable productive transformation with added value, the generation of livelihoods and decent work, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities, and increased access for women to care systems and social protection.,

And **if** the State improves public management and increases the protection and guarantee of rights, gender equality and social cohesion, while reducing threats to human security and promoting the eradication of all forms of violence.

Then, by 2026, higher levels of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Ecuador will be achieved so that, especially women belonging to the most excluded groups, can exercise their rights and contribute and benefit equally from development, humanitarian action, and peace building.

Because:

More Ecuadorian women, especially rural and Indigenous women, have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy;

More Ecuadorian women can access to care services for their children, guaranteed by stable public resources, men and private sector are more corresponsive of care activities and services, recognizing and reducing unpaid care work

More Ecuadorian women and girls, including women living in underserved and rural communities, live a life free from all forms of violence;

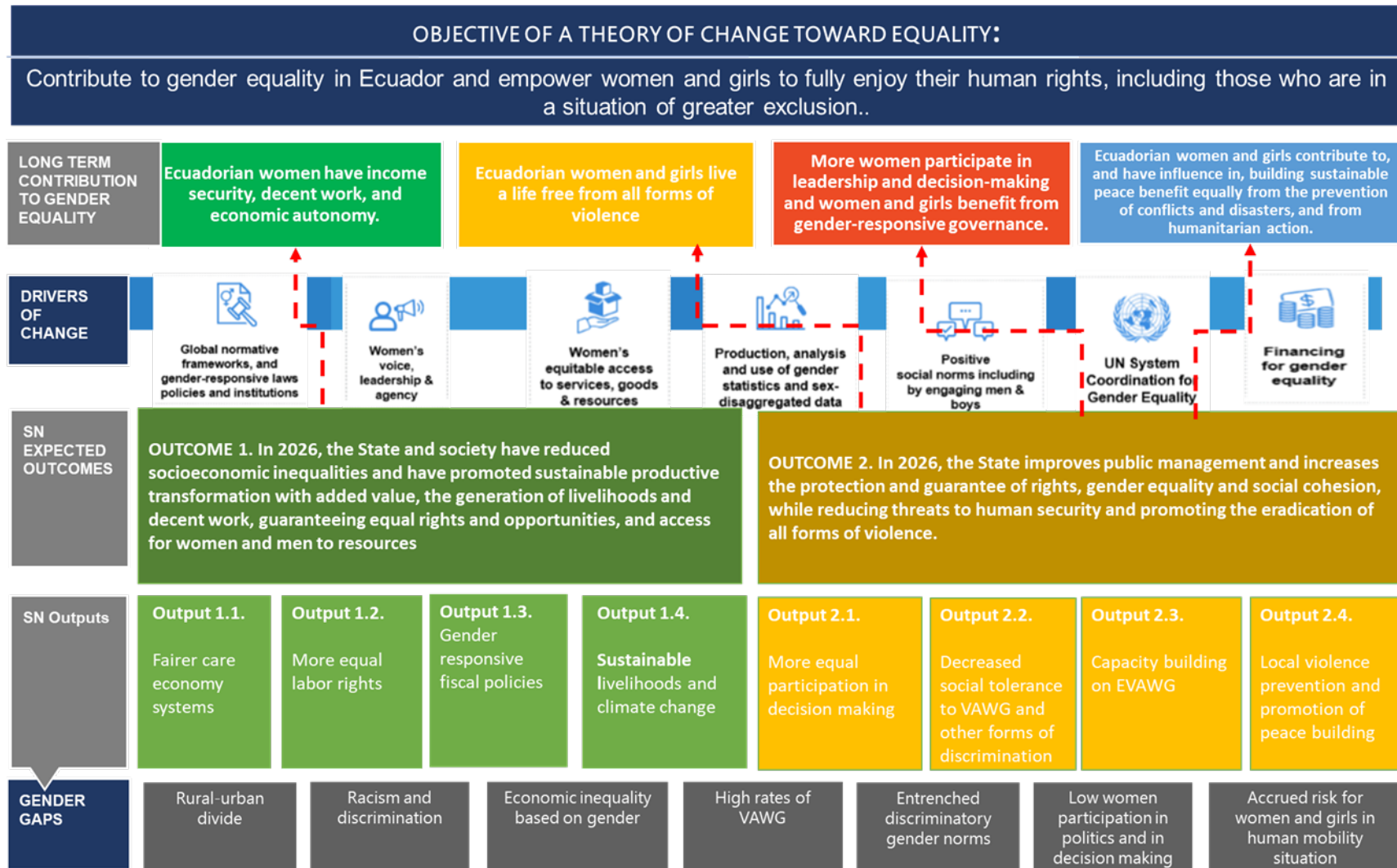
More Ecuadorian women participate in leadership and decision-making and women and girls benefit from gender-responsive governance;

And, more Ecuadorian women and girls contribute to, and have influence in building sustainable peace, benefit equally from the prevention of conflicts and disasters, and from humanitarian action.

The general theory of change presented here is summarized in the illustration on the next page.

Annexes 4 and 4A: Theory of Change provide more details on the linkages between UNSDCF Outcomes, SN Outcomes, SN Outputs and SP Outputs.

Illustration 1. Theory of Change Outline



3.7. Achieving the Outcomes of the Country Programme

In this section, the document describes “how” UN Women, in partnership with its allies, proposes to make a substantive contribution for the achievement of the Outcomes of our proposed programme. **Illustration 2** summarizes the results chain for each Outcome.

Outcome 1. In 2026, the State and society have reduced socioeconomic inequalities and have promoted sustainable productive transformation with added value, the generation of livelihoods and decent work, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities, and access for women and men to resources

To contribute to this Outcome, ECO has planned interventions that focuses on four intermediate outputs:

Output 1.1. Increased recognition, redistribution and reduction of unpaid care and domestic work.

Strategic actions to achieve Output 1.1 include:

- In partnership with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, with the National Council for Gender Equality and local governments, ECO will strengthen national and local institutional capacities for the design and the roll out of integrated care systems.
- ECO will provide technical assistance to increase the care sector capacity to generate decent work opportunities and livelihoods.
- In dialogue with private sector partners and worker unions, ECO will support companies and public institutions to generate regulations and policies that promote conciliation and co-responsibility of unpaid care work.
- Involving men, and young men, ECO will lead advocacy and behavioural change efforts to promote co-responsibility of care.

Output 1.2. More women gain improved access to and can exercise their economic and labour rights.

Strategic actions to achieve Output 1.2 include:

- Working closely with labour organizations and associations, ECO will strengthen the capacities of women's organizations and workers to demand and exercise labour and economic rights.
- ECO will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour, the National Assembly, and the National Council for Gender Equality for the generation and implementation of norms, policies, and instruments aimed at closing gaps, reducing workplace violence, and eradicating discrimination for gender reasons.
- ECO will facilitate spaces for dialogue and coordination between public and private sectors, and civil society organizations for the promotion of labour and economic rights of women. In parallel, leveraging the Women Economic Principles (WEPs), ECO will advocate for private sector initiatives for the economic empowerment of women.

Output 1.3. Increased fiscal resources and public and private financing aimed at reducing gender gaps, empowering women and increasing social investment with emphasis on the care systems.

Strategies to achieve Output 1.3 will entail:

- In partnership with the Ministry of Finance, the Planning Secretariat and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), ECO will promote the improved production of gendered macro-economic and fiscal statistical data.
- Building on our alliance with UNDP, UNICEF and Ministry of Finance, ECO will support the development of standards, policies and instruments to improve and advocate for the allocation of resources in favour of gender equality, with emphasis on social investment and care systems.
- ECO will support the development of participatory accountability systems to track fiscal spending and investment with the participation of women's organizations.
- ECO will lead pilot initiative to increase public and private institutional capacities on impact investments and inclusive financing for gender equality.

Output 1.4. More women have access to livelihoods and productive resources, within the framework of the sustainable production and consumption process and adaptation to climate change.

Modes of engagement and strategic actions to achieve output 1.4 comprise:

- Strengthen national and local policy mechanisms for women's access to productive resources: land, credit, technology and markets.
- Develop coordination and enforcement processes with civil society networks, and strengthening the capacities of women, with a rural emphasis, for the enforceability of their economic and participation rights.
- Develop innovative practices of production, sustainable consumption and adaptation to climate change with a gender approach, and recovery of traditional knowledge.
- Promote organizational, associative processes for women producers, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Production, the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition as well as our UN partners: FAO, WFP, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

Illustration 2. Results chain: outputs per SN Outcome.



Outcome 2. In 2026, the State improves public management and increases the protection and guarantee of rights, gender equality and social cohesion, while reducing threats to human security and promoting the eradication of all forms of violence.

UN Women’s contributions to achieve Outcome 2 are designed around **four intermediate outputs**:

Output 2.1. The participation of women in women's spaces in decision-making spaces at the national and local levels is strengthened.

To achieve Output 2.1., in partnership with the National Electoral Council, the Electoral Contentious Tribunal, political parties, women’s candidates, local governments, and CSOs specialized in electoral justice, ECO will implement the following strategic actions:

- Implement political participation monitoring exercises, based on the methodology of political parties ranking for gender equality.
- ECO will work to strengthen inter-party networks of women candidates and women in politics, and will develop training modules as well as mentoring schemes.

- ECO will socialize tools for electoral justice and will disseminate relevant information on routes and protocols for gender political reporting
- Thanks to the support of the UN Peace Building Fund, UN Women will spearhead national efforts to create a network of women peace-builders, with the opportunity of promoting binational learning exchanges with Colombia.

Output 2.2. Increase social awareness of gender equality, reducing social tolerance against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and violence against women.

- Building on prior interagency efforts, UN Women will lead the national multi-stakeholders' campaigns to eradicate VAWG: 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.
- ECO will socialize data and messages on social networks and other media about xenophobia and discrimination, and will involve young men and boys through advocacy campaigns, grass-root initiatives, and Partnership Agreements (PAs) to promote respectful, equitable and non-violent relationships, reduce acceptance of all forms of VAWG.
- Within the frame of the ongoing Spotlight initiative, ECO and its UN partners, will promote citizens' dialogues on the prevention of violence. ECO will also increase public servants' awareness on the functions and responsibilities of the State to EVAWG.
- ECO will increase its investments to prevent and punish all form of digital violence against women and girls, and will try to include a gender curriculum for Higher Education, which includes training of teachers and training of trainers.
- Capacity and engagement of women's and community groups and authorities in gender inclusive site-planning and income generation enhanced as part of the safe cities programme.

Output 2.3. Capacities of public officials for the prevention, care and punishment of violence against women are strengthened.

In close partnership with WROs, CSOs, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, The Human Rights Secretariat, the National Council for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, UN Women will undertake the following strategic actions to achieve Output 2.3.

- UN Women, together with the stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative will contribute to strengthening the Early Warning System to prevent femicides and to consolidate a Unique Register of Victims (RUV by its Spanish acronym).
- UN Women will lead national efforts to implement the CEDAW and the Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI by its Spanish acronym) recommendations, including the support to WROs to prepare shadow reports and keep institution accountable.
- ECO will generate spaces for exchanges between public officials (justice and police) and women from civil society on issues of VAWG, GBV, femicide.
- ECO is committed to contribute to the production of high-quality knowledge product on VAWG, and to socialize all knowledge products, instruments, protocols that already exist, including relevant information on women's rights national and international instruments.
- ECO will invest to train and increase institutional capacities of public servants with responsibilities in the referral pathway for survivors of gender-based violence.
- Strengthen society and women's organizations for the enforceability of rights, including accountability for CEDAW and their leadership in the associated monitoring mechanism.

Output 2.4. Local mechanisms for prevention, protection against gender violence and structural violence to promote peace and social cohesion are strengthened.

- UN Women will support Ecuador for the implementation of Resolution 1325, that addresses the impact of war on women and the importance of women's full and equal participation in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.
- Together with UN partners, UN Women will promote the design of SOP to Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and will lead Rapid Gender Analysis in humanitarian situations.
- UN Women, with UN agencies involved in the implantation of the UN Peace Building Fund Joint Programme, will support local dialogues on peace and social cohesion, and implement WRO's and youth-led initiatives to promote a culture of peace.
- ECO will support local dialogue and consultations for the definition of public policies for the prevention of VAWG and for enhanced coordination for protection.
- ECO will keep investing to share, socialize and reproduce the products and progresses made to enhance protection for women in human mobility situation, and will work in the educational field with boys and girls on VAWG, xenophobia and discrimination.
- At local level, UN Women will form, train and provide technical assistance to EVAWG user committees.
- ECO will provide direct technical support for the development of a national prevention policy and will socialize local referral pathways and local care protocols with public officials.

4. UN System Coordination

The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Ecuador is composed of **24 agencies, funds and programs** (12 of which are resident agencies and 12) are non-resident agencies with a physical presence in 19 provinces, and projects and initiatives in 23 of the country's 24 provinces, s.

In 2020, the UN System in Ecuador conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the UNCT - SWAP Gender Scorecard⁴³ (**Annex 3. UNCT - SWAP Gender Scorecard**) in which all 15 indicators were evaluated. However, in 2021, according to the guidelines of this process and following the methodology proposed for the Annual Progress Assessments, only 6 indicators of the UN SWAP Gender Scorecard were selected.

As shown in the Table 2 below, of the 15 indicators evaluated in 2020, 7 met the minimum requirements, 5 exceeded the minimum requirements, 2 were scored as approaching the minimum requirements, and only 1 as missing the minimum requirements. Of these, the 6 indicators that were evaluated for 2021 focused on those that might have the greatest areas of improvement to address. As a result, four of the indicators selected for the 2021 evaluation showed no change, while one showed regression and one showed significant progress.

⁴³ UN System in Ecuador (2021) UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard.

Table 2. UNCT - SWAP Gender Scorecard Ecuador

Indicator	Missing Minimum Requirements 2020	Approaches Minimum Requirements 2020	Meets Minimum Requirements 2020	Exceeds Minimum Requirements 2020	Missing Minimum Requirements 2021	Approaches Minimum Requirements 2021	Meets Minimum Requirements 2021	Exceeds Minimum Requirements 2021
1. Planning								
1.1. CCA								
1.2. UNDAF outcomes								
1.3. UNDAF indicators								
2. Programming and M&E								
2.1. Joint programs								
2.2. Communication and advocacy								
2.3. UNDAF monitoring and evaluation								
3. Partnerships								
3.1. Engagement with government								
3.2. Engagement GEEW CSOs								
4. Leadership and Organizational Culture								
4.1. Leadership								
4.2. Organizational culture								
4.3. Gender parity in staffing								
5. Gender Architecture and Capacities								
5.1. Gender coordination								
5.2. Capacity development								
6. Financial Resources								
6.1. Resources tracking								
7. Results								
7.1. Significant contribution to gender equality								

Source: UN (2021) UNCT - SWAP Gender Scorecard Ecuador

In this regard, it was identified that **Joint programs and engagement with civil society organizations on gender issues are priorities** for the United Nations System in Ecuador to promote the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

It is noteworthy that, in 2021, there was **significant progress in terms of gender parity in staffing**, going from approaching the minimum requirements to exceeding the minimum requirements, which demonstrates the commitment of the UN System in Ecuador to achieve gender equality by including in the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) gender-specific actions and indicators to foster gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Also, the evaluation showed that it is **necessary to continue working on capacity development and resource tracking**, as these indicators not only remained the same but are below the minimum requirements. The UNCT in Ecuador needs to design a capacity development plan based on an inter-agency capacity assessment, as well to ensure that UNCT induction material includes gender equality and the empowerment of women commitments and related development challenges of the country. It is also **necessary to conduct at least one training event on the gender marker (GEM)**.

Finally, it should be noted that, although the CCA was still under construction at the time of the evaluation, its status has gone from meeting the minimum requirements to approaching the minimum requirements. It is therefore urgent that the UN System in Ecuador conducts a **gender analysis oriented to the underlying causes of inequality**, not only mentioning the disaggregation of

the social problems that affect society by sex, but also identifying the factors that affect women in having the same opportunities as men, such as employment or income.

UN agencies efforts in Ecuador are harmonized under the **United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)**. ECO has actively participated in the elaboration of the new Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and has managed to mainstream the gender approach in all the outcomes of the Cooperation Framework, paying special attention to outcomes 3 and 4, on which it is developing its strategic lines of action to coordinate joint actions with other agencies of the United Nations System and strategic partners. UN Women will participate in the **outcome groups** of the UNSDCF and as well as in the Inter-Agency Group on Data Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (GGDSE).

UN Women, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO), supports key functions that allow accountability and mainstreaming gender equality within the UN System, through the **Gender Score Card**. It also supports the State of Ecuador's **accountability** functions, and civil society engagement, along with the OHCHR, the RCO and other UN agencies, in the face of the **internationally acquired commitments**: a) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), b) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

For 2023-2026, UN Women will Lead or Co-Lead the **Gender and Human Rights Thematic Group (GTI-G)**, which main tasks are related to: a) strengthen the joint monitoring of SDGs with an intersectional perspective, b) ensure gender financing in joint programmes and beyond, across the triple nexus, c) strengthen the UN System accountability on gender through the periodic use of the Gender Score Card and the Gender Marker, and d) enhance joint monitoring and reporting on key international standards.

ECO will play an active role in the **Humanitarian Country Team** on Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) and in the **Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM)**, as well as the Group for the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PEAS Group), with the objective of mainstreaming the gender perspective in the humanitarian response., with the purpose of: a) strengthening a gender-responsive humanitarian response across all actors integrating the HCT, b) informing gender sensitive-assessment in humanitarian contexts (gender alerts); c) co-leading the formulation of gender-responsive humanitarian plans, d) promoting women and girls rights and leadership in humanitarian contexts.

UN Women actively participates in the **Interagency Communication Group (UNCG)**, co-leading UN **16 Days of Activism**, and other commemorative dates that promote and make visible the defence of gender equality, as well as other campaigns to promote human rights, anti-xenophobia and the culture of peace. In this area a potential collaboration with the **UNTF** is possible and could increase ECO advocacy capacity.

UN Women has significantly increased its participation in **joint programmes**: PBF, SDG Fund, Spotlight Initiative and, in two initiatives with joint execution character Pro-Amazonia and with WFP. Joint Programmes (JP) have become the main programmatic delivery mechanism of UN Women in Ecuador, representing 44 per cent of the non-core budget in 2020. UN joint funding mechanisms, such as Joint Programs, are expected to play an increasingly important role in funding UN Women programming.

Based on the finding of the **UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard**, UN Women will increase its efforts to improve the tracking of UN budget for GEWE, and the consistent use of Gender Equality Marker (GEM).

5. Strategic partnerships

5.1. The UN System

The UN System is the primary partner of UN Women to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

In the SN period, UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP will work together in the implementation of the second phase of the Spotlight Initiative. In conjunction with the Ecuadorian State and Civil Society, the joint programme will advance in the implementation of the Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence against Women. (Outputs 2.2,2.3, and 2.4 of the SN)

With UNDP and UNODC, ECO will implement the initiative “Capacities for peace, security and the reduction of violence in Ecuador” to contribute to strengthen actors and institutions in charge of preventing and managing social conflicts and guaranteeing citizen and community security, both at the national level and in prioritized territories (Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 of the SN)

UN Women will look to build on the experience in working together with WFP, FAO and IFAD to increase rural and indigenous women livelihoods, access to productive resources, within the framework of the sustainable production and consumption process, adaptation to climate change (Output 1.4 of the SN)

Together with partners of the **Working Group for Refugees and Migrants** (GTRM), UN Women will sustain UN efforts to provide a comprehensive response to persons in human mobility situations. ECO efforts will focus in a) prevention and response to VAWG, and b) the economic integration of migrants and asylum seekers (Output 1.1 and 2.3 of the SN).

Building on the SDG-Fund joint programme, UNDP has been identified as a potential to work on gender sensitive fiscal and macroeconomic policies (Output 1.2).

Risks associated to the dialogue with UN entities is related to the competition for funding, in a middle-income country, where international donors have been withdrawing or have reduce the resources for multilateral cooperation programmes.

5.2. National and local authorities

Working with national authorities is a crucial aspect of our work in Ecuador and a key element to build conditions for sustainable change. During the previous years, UN Women has built strong relationship with national, cantonal and municipal authorities.

As the main partner for 2023 onwards, UN Women will be supporting the creation and establishment of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights. This will be a key opportunity to have a counterpart with high hierarchy within the government and possibilities of consolidating the gender equality agenda for Ecuador.

To work towards an increased economic autonomy for women (Outcome 1), ECO will build on results achieved in alliance with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, the National Council for Gender Equality and local governments that are central pieces to design and the roll out of care systems. (Output 1.1 of the SN)

With relation to labour policies, normative frameworks and reforms, ECO partners with the Ministry of Labour, the National Assembly, and the National Council for Gender Equality with the purpose of reaching equal work rights and eradicate GBV at the workplace (Output 1.2 of the SN).

To advance on gender responsive fiscal policies and macroeconomic policies, UN Women has built a consistent relationship with the Ministry of Finance, the Planning Secretariat and the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (Output 1.3 of the SN).

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Ministry of Production, the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition are ECO's key institutional partners to increase the access to livelihoods and productive resources, to rural and Indigenous women. (Output 1.4 of the SN)

In the fight against all form of VAWG, UN Women will scale up its efforts to support local authorities that have been involved in the Safe Cities Programme and in the Spotlight Initiatives. While, at national level, main counterparts are the Human Rights Secretariat, the National Council for Gender Equality, the National Police, the Ministry of Justice and the others that are part of the Comprehensive National System to Prevent and Eradicate Gender Violence (Outputs 2.2., 2.3 and 2.4 of the SN)

5.3. International partners

The Gender Table for International Cooperation (MEGECI by its Spanish acronym) has and will constitute a strategic space that contributes to the growth of ECO, providing it with a platform for coordinated action, with a positive impact on public advocacy in favour of women's rights.

International partners are crucial to ensure that Ecuador implement the CEDAW and the Follow-up Mechanism of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI by its Spanish acronym) recommendations.

5.4. Civil society and private partners

UN Women has been effective in creating a CEDAW monitoring committee that allows WROs to keep institutional accountable on the international conventions. WROs have taken a leading role in legislative dialogue processes (e.g. Democracy Code) and to discuss with the government key economic policy measures (both fiscal and labour), as well as leading the campaigns related to the 16 days of activism and the commemoration of November 25.

UN Women direct support will focus on organizations that support or provide services to women in conditions of human mobility and to survivors of VAWG, through the Spotlight Initiative. ECO has worked with indigenous organizations and federations (CONFENAIE), especially in the Amazon region, promoting the political participation of Amazonian women and has promoted the work with mixed organizations to promote co-responsible and non-violent masculinities.

ECO will work with unions of domestic workers (Table for the Rights of Paid Domestic Workers) and the National Labour Union (Frente Unitario de Trabajadores) to strengthen their capacities to demand labour and economic rights, and will engage with care sector workers to improve work conditions and invest in the care sector capacity to generate decent work opportunities and livelihoods.

In the new SN period, support to CSOs will extend to youth and young boys' organizations that provide sport, education and social services, to scale up interventions to promote young women's rights and more equal masculinities.

Should the PBF accept the “Capacities for peace, security and the reduction of violence in Ecuador” proposal, ECO would also be able to invest into: a) a CSO-led funding mechanism to design and implement community led interventions to promote women leadership in conflict prevention, mediation and the promotion of peace culture, and b) to build a national network of women peacebuilders (Output 2.3 of the SN).

The Global Compact has been a key factor in expanding the alliance between the office and the private sector. The companies have been satisfied with the assistance received in the framework of the WEPS, which has motivated them to carry out pro bono activities. In dialogue with private sector partners, especially with companies that subscribed to the WEPS, ECO will support companies to generate regulations and internal policies that promote conciliation and co-responsibility of unpaid care work.

6. Programme sustainability including exit strategy

Based on key lessons learned, to ensure programme sustainability, UN Women ECO has determined to focusing on: a) ensuring the **effective implementation of our triple mandate in each operational initiative**, in order to increase collective efforts through coordination and the alignment to international commitments and national priorities, b) maintaining partnerships at national level and redouble its efforts to build capacities at local level, c) sustain civil society organizations and networks as critical actors for the sustainability of the changes achieved.

Main **challenges** for sustainability are related to: a) the reduction of national and international resources for GEWE, b) the shrinking of national public institutions budget, and the high turnover of officials, c) the socio-political instability and the recurrent humanitarian emergencies.

Opportunities have been identified in a) the decentralization of services and power, b) the heterogeneity and active role of civil society, and its capacity to keep institution accountable, c) the level of advance of Ecuador, as middle-income country, in socio-economic policies.

Based on positive outcomes from the implementation of the Spotlight Initiative and the Safe Cities programme, ECO will promote national ownership and will keep investing to **strengthen the justice and local institutions that provide protection and integrated EVAWG services to survivors of violence**, an approach that has proved to be effective to materialize women’s rights.

UN Women will also invest to spearhead local efforts to increase the **coverage and quality of care services**. With these sectors, efforts will focus on institutionalize capacities but also to pilot, when possible, **municipal care systems that could be scaled up** or serve as positive example to peers.

ECO has **already demonstrated its capacity to institutionalize capacities with line ministries** such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Agriculture still more gender-sensitive data would help institutions to track labour gender inequalities and discriminations against women in the labour market. Enhancing data quality and usage is a cornerstone of our intervention to improve women economic autonomy.

Improved data quality and accessibility will also help institutions to design fiscal and macro-economic policies that are gender-responsive. ECO will therefore support national efforts to produce quality, comparable, and accessible statistics to address national data gaps and meet policy and reporting commitments under the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and in alignment with international commitments.

WROs, civil society organizations and networks are important actors for the sustainability of the changes achieved for women's rights. The case of the **Antisuyo Warmikuna School** is a relevant example of capacity building in alliance with Indigenous peoples, which represents an example of development with an ethnic approach and respect for the country's cultural multiplicity.

Notwithstanding, in Ecuador WROs and CSOs are going through a period of uncertainty, limitations in their actions and little support from the State. In addition, as highlighted by the CPE evaluation, ECO does not have a strategic approach with an exit strategy in the joint work with this type of counterparts. Determining modalities to cooperate with WROs and CSOs that ensure an impact on GEWE in the long term is an issue of which ECO is aware and that must be addressed during the SN.

Considering the deficit of transparency of public institutions, and as one of the main strategies to ensure the political role of WROs and civil society organizations, ECO will support bottom-up approaches, and will enhance **participatory accountability mechanisms** and strengthen CSOs and WROs' to keep institutions accountable for service delivery, including the fulfilment of international commitments.

ECO will implement a **knowledge management strategy** to position UN Women as a knowledge hub on GEWE in Ecuador. Our purpose is expanding the use of evidence and democratize the access to knowledge produced by UN Women and its partners.

ECO will also ensure to embed exit strategies during the design stage of each **new project and joint programme**, so that all new interventions follow a clear path to sustainability - through scalability or transfer to local/national ownership.

ECO will apply the following proposed **exit/sustainability strategy criteria**: a) intervention has achieved its objective and can be withdrawn; b) intervention can be handed over to able local/national partner; c) intervention is fully integrated or institutionalized in existing systems, d) intervention can be scaled up.

The **exit/sustainability strategy will be a critical part of programme annual and mid-term reviews**, to allow for continuous and systematic discussion. Both Mid-term Review (MTR) and final evaluation Terms of Reference will include exit and sustainability strategy considerations among the main objectives of these exercises.

7. Management and operations

According to the findings of the Country Portfolio Evaluation, throughout the previous Strategic Note 2019-2022, the percentage of budget execution has remained constant (above 90%), which demonstrate a good performance of ECO in terms of efficiency⁴⁴.

During the last four years, UN Women has been successful in strengthening its resource mobilization, diversifying funding sources and including innovative program lines ("frontier issues"). However, despite the results achieved, there is uncertainty about the stability of resource mobilization in the medium and long term⁴⁵. This critical risk has significant implications for the proposed SN, both in terms of scope and CO structure.

⁴⁴ UN Women Ecuador (2022) Strategic Note of Ecuador 2019-2022 Evaluation Report

⁴⁵ Ibid.

ECO follows the management and operations structure established in UN Women Strategic Plan. The **Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness Objectives** (OEEF) section is designed around five cluster areas, for each of which specific country outputs are proposed:

Cluster Area 1. Principled performance: focusing on keeping UN Women a responsible and trustworthy development organization that manages its financial and other resources with integrity, which is consistent with its programmatic ambitions and fiduciary obligations.

- **Output 1.1.** The efficiency of financial management and procurement processes is improved.
- **Output 1.2.** Audits recommendations, and best practices for ERM, BCP, Occupational Safety and Health requirements and UNSMS Security policies are implemented.

Cluster Area 2. Advancing partnerships: whose purpose is that ECO effectively leverages and expands its partnerships, communications, and advocacy capacities to increase support and funding for the gender equality in the fulfilment of its triple mandate.

- **Output 2.1.** Enhanced coordination with member States for improved advocacy, accountability on normative frameworks and international conventions, and to enhance resource mobilization for GEWE.
- **Output 2.2.** CO develops dedicated initiatives to engage with less/non-traditional partnerships: youth, disabilities organizations, medias, grassroots advocates, local authorities and CBOS in alignment with its partnership strategies, focusing on underserved communities.
- **Output 2.3.** A communication and advocacy strategy is implemented to a) improve access to quality knowledge for partners b) promote normative and policy advancement, c) increase UN Women visibility in support of resource mobilization.

Cluster Area 3. Business transformation: aimed at promoting the transformation of the organization and its business model to generate impact at scale, rooted in a culture of continuous improvement.

- **Output 3.1.** Business Processes are improved as part of UN-Women continuous business transformation
- **Output 3.2.** A knowledge management strategy is designed and implemented to increase UN Women positioning as knowledge hub on GEWE in Palestine.

Cluster Area 4. Empowered people: to foster an empowered workforce and promote an inclusive organizational culture.

- **Output 4.1.** UN Women employees have access to skills and career development opportunities in accordance with their interests and organizational possibilities, promoting greater job satisfaction.
- **Output 4.2.** UN Women advances towards a more inclusive organization, where also office premises are more inclusive for all current and perspective employees as well as guests and visitors.

Cluster Area 5. Products services and processes: whose horizon is an ECO that efficiently and effectively fulfils all institutional processes that promote the integrated execution of its normative, programmatic, and coordination mandate.

- **Output 5.1.** UN Women has a solid Monitoring system, collects data for GEWE and for improved accountability, and learning through independent evaluations.
- **Output 5.2.** UN Women support the UN system’s efforts for increased accountability on GEWE.

ECO has progressively applied the **Cost Recovery Policy** and will ensure compliance with financial regulations, policies, and instructions throughout the strategic note.

ECO has a **delegation of authority** and a clear delegation of responsibility among its staff. This ensures adequate management at the programmatic, administrative, and financial levels.

7.1. Human Resources

In line with the financial forecast, and targets established in the Resource Mobilization Strategy (**Annex 10. RM Strategy**), ECO will achieve corporate standards for the category of a **Medium CO typology**. ECO will ensure an investment ranging from USD 2.3 and 4.5 M, for DRF per year, and will maintain an average budget per SN Outcome above US\$ 650.000 per year.

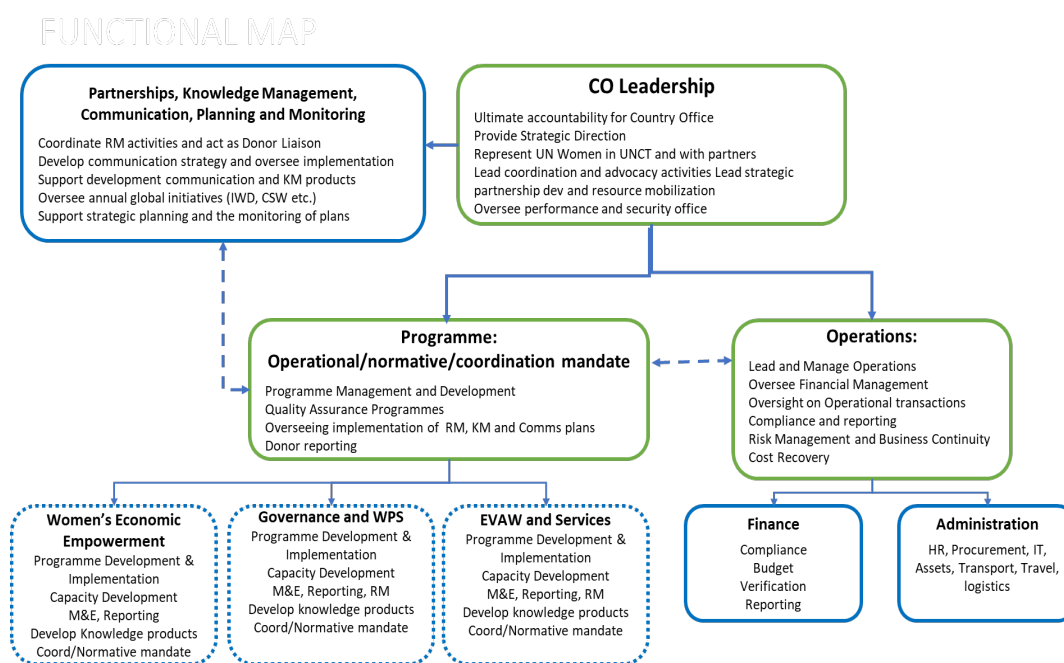
In **Annex 5. SN Budget**, details on the annual budget per Resource, Outcome and Output are presented both for DRF and OEEF.

Table 4: Budget per Outcome and OEEF, 2023-2026

	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Development Results					
Outcome 1. The State and society have reduced socioeconomic inequalities and have promoted sustainable productive transformation with added value, the generation of livelihoods and decent work, guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities, and access for women and men to	\$950,808	\$1,500,413	\$1,700,413	\$2,120,413	\$6,272,047
Outcome 2. The State improves public management and increases the protection and guarantee of rights, gender equality and social cohesion, while reducing threats to human security and promoting the eradication of all forms of violence	\$1,304,645	\$1,566,806	\$1,766,806	\$2,376,806	\$7,015,065
Total DRF	\$2,255,454	\$3,067,219	\$3,467,219	\$4,497,219	\$13,287,111
Organizational Results					
Total OEEF	\$952,704	\$1,019,236	\$1,035,412	\$1,075,077	\$4,082,429
Total DRF + OEEF	\$3,208,158	\$4,086,455	\$4,502,631	\$5,572,296	\$17,369,540

Based on the analysis of the existing portfolio and of UN Women’s triple mandate, the CO has determined that the following functions are needed to fully implement the Strategic Note: **Annex 7. Functional Map**.

Illustration 3. Functional map.



As presented in the HR Planning table (**Annex 8. HR Plan**) and in the organigram (**Annex 8b. ECO organigram**) the existing financial scenario does not suggest to the CO the opportunity to expand its existing staffing structure. The Service Contracts financed by non-core resources will be reviewed according to financial availability. The office is committed to strengthen the internal capacity for planning, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management, increase investments in resource mobilization and increase internal capacity to fulfil the coordination mandate.

In the SN period, the knowledge management functions will be merged with the PME and communications team to form a crosscutting team that will provide support to all thematic areas.

Ongoing training and capacity building: All the personnel in the country office has completed the mandatory trainings. Efforts will be made to strengthen UN Women's systems at the country level, including monitoring and RBM. Other training related to the triple nexus and the mandate of UN Women will be identified by the representative, according to programmatic needs.

Empowered workforce: The office is committed to provide to its personnel opportunities to grow professionally, increase its knowledge and in participating in training or courses that can enhance their capacity to lead gender equality initiatives. Participation to trainings, courses and webinars/seminars will be evaluated on yearly basis, and a learning plan will be approved depending on availability of funding.

7.2. Security management

Security Mainstreaming & Compliance: the office will continue to mainstream security in all programmes; security allocations are captured under direct management costs within programmes budgets. The office is 100% compliant with security requirements, sustaining 100% Security and Safety compliance Survey.

Through annual updates and testing of the Business Continuity and Crisis Management Application (BCCMA), the office will seek to achieve 100% compliance with the Business Continuity and Crisis Management requirements and will conduct facilitated exercises with Regional Security Specialist to strengthen overall resilience. The evolving security situation will be closely monitored to ensure a proactive approach to security, including periodic consultations with the Regional Security Specialist and early deployment of the same if the need arises, quarterly update of personnel contact details in the UN Women personnel accounting and notification system, and testing of the same, and quarterly review of logistical arrangements in line with the Security Plan.

Mandatory Security Training: All staff has been certified in mandatory safety training and local SSAFE training, and the compliance of new staff is regularly monitored. The newly hired personnel will have the obligation to complete the mandatory safety courses before being operational.

7.3. Operational and finance management strategies

Compliance with financial regulations, policies and instructions: The office has been investing in the financial capacities of both staff and responsible partners through trainings and coaching sessions.

The anticipated institutional **migration from ATLAS to Quantum system** beginning of 2023 will have great impact on the work and delivery of ECO. Accordingly, the office will participate actively in all online and face to face trainings to ensure building the capacity of all staff both programme and operations to master the use of the new system.

Business Continuity Management: The Country Office has a Business Continuity and Crisis Management Plan in place, it is reviewed and tested on yearly basis, that have worked very well to respond to the contingencies determined by COVID-19.

Audit Preparedness and Support to offices: ECO continues to use the corporate pre-audit checklist to ensure preparedness for any upcoming audit/ verification exercises. The monthly and year-end certification checklist also ensures compliance with corporate guidance under HR, Finance, assets management and risk register.

Budget: The general budget for the Strategic Note period 2023-2026 is estimated at US\$ \$17,369,540. The average projected annual budget is US\$ 4,342,385, with a **management ratio for the SN period estimated in 19%**.

In **Table 5** the Institutional Budget, calculated according to the ProForma costs, is valued yearly at US\$ 784,135 for the four-year period. Core resources, also projected as stable, amount to US\$ 390,000 yearly.

To date, the Country Office has negotiated non-core resources for US\$ 1,348,235. Ongoing project are presented in **Annex 11. Project Register**.

Additional resource mobilization discussions are ongoing with the EU for the support of the follow up of the Spotlight Initiative, with the Municipality of Quito, with PRM and with the UK Biodiverse Landscape Fund.

Resources to be mobilized adds US\$ 10,870,000, with a yearly average of US\$ 2,717,500.

Table n. 5: Annual budget by source of financing.

SN Budget (US\$), per source, per year							
AWP	IB	CORE	XB and Earnings	NON-CORE AVAILABLE	NON-CORE TBM	Total	Mgt Ratio
2023	\$784,135	\$390,000	\$45,788	\$1,348,235	\$640,000	\$3,208,158	25%
2024	\$784,135	\$390,000	\$112,320	\$0	\$2,800,000	\$4,086,455	20%
2025	\$784,135	\$390,000	\$128,496	\$0	\$3,200,000	\$4,502,631	18%
2026	\$784,135	\$390,000	\$168,161	\$0	\$4,230,000	\$5,572,296	15%
Total	\$3,136,541	\$1,560,000	\$454,765	\$1,348,235	\$10,870,000	\$17,369,540	19%

Strengthened link between work and procurement planning: The office has used procurement and implementation plans. Procurement plans are periodically reviewed jointly between the operations and programme teams. The office will make efforts to advance towards more integrated procurement plans in order to reduce the volume of small operations, establishing long terms agreements, or multi-thematic call for proposals for implementing partners.

Capacity development and supervision: For civil society partner organizations signing Partnership Agreements (PA) with ECO, UN Women will plan training development, accompaniment of the partners, and appropriate follow-up to ensure an excellent level of implementation and respect of procedures.

7.4. Facilities and administrative services

The Strategic Note should ensure compliance with the Secretary General’s resolutions on Common Premises and Common Back Offices. This is important in case the new Field Office is created under the current SN. In addition, this section should reference the participation by all field offices in the annual **Greenhouse Gas** (GHG) Inventory exercise driven by the UN SG’s mandate on environmental sustainability.

Asset management and oversight: ECO efficiently manages assets, and premises in line with the assets management policy, ensuring verification of assets and premises data twice a year as per the corporate policy.

8. Monitoring and evaluation

8.1. Monitoring

The **monitoring function** in UN Women has a two-folded purpose: a) ensuring that Result Based Management is the essential principle that guides quality implementation across the country programme, b) continuously improving results’ accountability to member States, communities, and national partners.

ECO will use the **RMS platform** to ensure quarterly monitoring of financial and programme implementation, and to generate alerts on activities and products that may need particular attention from the administration.

Indicators for both DRF and OEEF have been selected using, as primary sources the **SP IRRF 2022-2025 Indicators**, disaggregating them by sex, age and domain, when pertinent to the country programme.

The **BMTs survey** has been used to identify most suitable indicators, with associated baselines, and to minimize use of SN-tailored indicators. **UNSDCF indicators** have been used as complementary

monitoring tools at output level. While **SN-tailored indicators** in SN/Work Plan have been reduced to minimum and only when relevant to monitor the UNSDCF.

The monitoring of bi-annual work plans will be associated to **annual reports**. Annual reports and project reports will be generated and shared to ensure accountability and effective communication with member States and national stakeholders.

In line with corporate guidance, a **mid-term review (MTR)** will be carried during the last quarter of 2024.

Joint monitoring mechanism: Monitoring for the UNSDCF will be developed under the leadership of the RCO. “Results Groups” are to be organized to ensure appropriate coherence, synergies and implementation monitoring. Un Women will also participate in the **interagency data a monitoring task force**. Additionally, the **Gender and Human Rights Thematic Group (GTI-G)** coordinates joint gender actions and supports the monitoring of progress towards the commitments assumed by the UNSDCF for equality in Ecuador.

UN Women promotes the **UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard**, as a monitoring instrument to provide evidence on how to improve the overall UN System performance to deliver on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment commitments.

UN Women will also promote the use of **Gender Equality Marker (GEM)** as a monitoring tool to assist UN system-wide accountability on gender-sensitive investment.

Annex 11 presents the **Monitoring Evaluation and Research Plan** for the period 2023-2026.

8.2. Evaluation

The **evaluation function** for ECO SN period 2023-2026 is aligned with the Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2020)⁴⁶.

Evaluation in UN Women acts as a means to support the **gender mainstreaming** agenda and the norms and principles outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 and resolution 2011/5 and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) policy on gender equality and women’s empowerment and its corresponding System-wide Action Plan 2.0.

The evaluation function has is **three equally important purposes**: a) it is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, including women who are rights holders and duty bearers, in managing for results, b) it provides credible and reliable evidence for decision-making in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to improve results, and (c) it contributes important lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work, also contributing to National Evaluation Capacity Development.

UN Women subscribes to the **UNEG definition of evaluation** and directly incorporates principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women’s full enjoyment of their human rights.

Key evaluations for 2023-2026, as per the Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan (MERP), are:

46 UN Women (2022) Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/evaluation-policy-of-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>)

- Evaluation of PRM project: Promoting Gender equality and empowerment for women in situations of displacement and refuge.
- Joint Final Evaluation of the Spotlight Initiative.
- Country Portfolio Evaluation of UN Women Ecuador Strategic Note 2023-2026.

Other evaluations may be added, depending on new non-core projects or joint programmes.

9. Research and knowledge management

In the framework of the prior Strategic Note, ECO established the need for a Knowledge Management Strategy⁴⁷ that would enable high-level policy advocacy, support resource mobilization efforts, contribute to positioning the Office as a benchmark for knowledge on gender, strengthen relations with media, civil society organizations and opinion leaders, and generate links with the regional community of practice and regional thematic knowledge management initiatives.

The goal of the Knowledge Management Strategy in Ecuador (2021 – 2026) is to contribute to the positioning of ECO as a reference on the promotion of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, through the following specific objectives: 1) Strengthen knowledge production, documentation and analysis. 2) Strengthen knowledge sharing within UN Women and with partners. 3) To develop a culture of knowledge sharing and strengthen collaboration between different areas. 4) Produce products that support the advocacy work of UN Women's office.

ECO will engage with the **regional knowledge management strategy** and process. In this sense, during the period, ECO will be able to reinforce the knowledge product management process by incorporating the use of technological tools to generate, standardize and systematize documents and initiatives. The proper use of these tools will enable strategic planning, facilitate interdisciplinary review, exchange of knowledge and experiences, reduce duplication, and increase the transformative use of knowledge products produced by ECO and the region.

ECO, based on the Global Knowledge Management Strategy, will focus its work on annual phases, which will be managed through a 4-step process, resulting from the consultations and systematization of the internal workshop held with the UN Women ECO team and consultations with counterparts, partners and other external audiences.

Phase 1. Information: To begin the knowledge management process, it is essential to identify the information that UN Women ECO generates on a recurrent basis, as well as the information it needs to produce to continue its positioning as a reference for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Phase 2. Knowledge generation: This second phase seeks to process the information generated and turn it into knowledge. Currently, UN Women ECO generates knowledge in quantity and quality with counterparts, project implementing partners, and above all with beneficiaries and beneficiaries.

Phase 3. Knowledge dissemination: The way in which it is shared knowledge through specific channels to identified audiences.

⁴⁷ UN Women Ecuador, 2022. Knowledge Management Strategy 2021 -2026.

Phase 4. Knowledge application: The way in which the knowledge obtained it is used and how it is integrated to the execution and if it is generated a new knowledge management process, for example in advocacy opportunities, generating products that serve for decision making.

In order to comply this Knowledge Management Strategy, the target audiences are set in accordance with the audiences defined in the Communication Strategy:

Internal audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. UN Women Headquarters ii. UN Women Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. iii. Country office staff.
External audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Women's organizations. ii. Civil Society Organizations iii. Academia - Networks iv. National and local governments v. Potential donors and corporate partners in the country. vi. Media. vii. Women (unorganized) and Youth viii. Private sector
Intermediate audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Civil Society Advisory Group and its participants. ii. UN System Agencies

The knowledge products that ECO produces include programming guidance, research and evaluation reports, flagship reports, policy papers and capacity building modules, methodologies that have been generated. These products can take different formats such as publications, infographics, interactive tools, e-learning courses, etc. These products can be considered for publication and dissemination to external audiences, and can be used as an internal reference product, reflection material or knowledge update.

Within the consultation processes, it was noted that there is limited access to the products generated by teams from other projects or other UN Women offices in the region and the world. Therefore, the activation or generation of digital repositories and other spaces for knowledge exchange are essential.

It is important to highlight that knowledge products should be generated based on the Guide for the Development of Knowledge Products developed by UN Women Headquarters.

Finally, the enabling factors that will allow the implementation of this strategy are:

- a) Allocate financial resources from programmatic lines and/or projects for the generation of knowledge products and their distribution.
- b) Incorporate in project activities, budget lines and terms of reference, as well as specific products that contribute to the generation of knowledge.
- c) Periodically identify topics, processes and/or results that can be transformed into knowledge products in line with this strategy.
- d) Keeping the team updated on changes and improvements made in the knowledge management processes.

Key **knowledge products** for the SN period include:

- o Guidelines for the inclusion of GBV prevention in public spaces with Human Mobility approach.

- Systematization of “Caminando” Project, a comprehensive response to human mobility challenges.
- Labour market study to identify normative, policy and economic gaps that hinder the process of socioeconomic integration for people in human mobility.

10. Resource mobilization

The **Resource Mobilization Strategy**⁴⁸ (**Annex 10. Resource Mobilization Strategy**) is aligned with the priorities of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, as well as with the Government's priorities, as set out in its 2021-2025 Opportunity Creation Plan.

The Mid-Term Review has revealed a high appreciation of UN Women's partner institutions for its work, and a high compliance rate in relation to the partners and allies with whom ECO works to contribute to women's empowerment.

UN Women has significantly expanded its partnerships with the private sector, through the UN Global Compact, in which it has positioned the WEPs. As a result, more companies are approaching the entity for technical assistance. Potential areas for cooperation with the private sector could include STEM, digitization and Circular Economy. However, UN Women has not yet been able to financially capitalize on the technical assistance provided for the implementation of the WEPs, which is a new directive at the organizational level.

Nevertheless, an effective resource mobilization strategy is not just about accessing financial resources, but about building relationships, demonstrating financial accountability, achieving results, reporting results, and providing partners with recognition of those results. In this way, resources and results have a mutually reinforcing relationship. If UN Women converts resources into visible results, it will attract more resources.

In this regard, UN Women has expanded and diversified its donors, mainly through the application to competitive funds (PBF, SDG, Spotlight, PRM), which demonstrates a good capacity of the team in the formulation of quality and innovative inter-agency funding proposals. It has also gained access to new cooperating partners such as the UN SDG Fund and the PBF, through a joint proposal with Colombia, to the State Department's PRM, and has maintained its privileged relationship with AECID and decentralized cooperation sources. However, the limited number of cooperants at the national level remains a challenge for the medium and long term.

For UN Women, it is essential to have a diversified financing strategy and to intensify efforts to mobilize regular resources, including through partnerships with the private sector, IFIs and national and local governments. This will be complemented with traditional financing mechanisms, through bilateral cooperants and participation in competitive funds.

It has also been identified the need to include the participation of the operations team in resource mobilization processes in order to insert the design processes of new proposals in a plan that ensures the well-balanced growth of the program, the portfolio and the Office's team.

In addition, UN Women has determined, for the future, to design new projects for resource mobilization in line with the entity's territorialization strategy, in order to avoid the risk of high

⁴⁸ UN Women Ecuador, 2022. Resource Mobilization Strategy 2022 - 2026.

territorial fragmentation and the impossibility of taking advantage of opportunities for economies of scale.

Based on lessons learned and evidence regarding UN Women's positioning, the Ecuador ECO's resource mobilization strategy for the period 2022-2026 prioritizes the following thematic work areas of the Strategic Plan:

- Women's economic empowerment (which includes elements of climate change adaptation and women's leadership in environmental protection and sustainable development processes).
- Elimination of violence against women and girls
- Women, peace and security, humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction.

Programmatic elements related to democratic governance, as well as women's participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels, would continue to be addressed in a cross-cutting manner in the country program.

The target of the Ecuador ECO is to mobilize, over a period of four (4) years, US\$10.8 million to cover the investments foreseen in the Strategic Note, contribute substantively to the UNSDCF, advance the 2030 Agenda on gender equality and women's empowerment, and ensure a solid entity, with high levels of specialization and efficiency for the fulfilment of its mandate.

The above through 3 strategic lines of action:

- UN Women's resource mobilization strategy in Ecuador is based on building long-term alliances, consolidating partnerships and expanding partnerships with institutions and actors that converge towards the goal of women's empowerment.
- Strengthen positioning and trust among traditional partners and allies.
- UN Women has managed to build a solid team in Ecuador, with high technical capacities, supported by an efficient operations team. However, in order to meet the challenges of expanding its programmatic portfolio and fulfilling its commitments to substantive equality, Ecuador ECO is committed to promoting a continuous improvement plan, with the aim of consolidating institutional capacities.

Yet, ECO faces a number of challenges and risks but also opportunities through which it can maximize its resource mobilization capacity.

Some of the challenges include the following:

- **Stagnation of core resources:** at the global level, stagnation has been observed in the allocation of Institutional Budget (IB) and *Core* for country offices. While the Office has grown in terms of Non-Core resource mobilization, resources for the funding of its team and core functions have remained almost unchanged for several years. This has significantly increased the ratio of $[(Non-Core) / (IB + Core resources)]$, increasing the organizational risks to properly implement its portfolio and generating stress on the staff. The recent institutional decision about not directly allocate extra-budgetary (XB) resources to country offices has increased the level of uncertainty regarding resources for funding essential positions such as communication, monitoring, planning, resource mobilization and coordination.
- **WEPs:** UN Women has encountered significant challenges in monetizing the technical assistance provided to companies to advance the implementation of WEPs.

- **Gender bonds:** At the global level, gender bonds are emerging as one of the financing mechanisms to increase the resources allocated by governments to investments that promote policies and programs to advance gender equality. But at the corporate level there are no clear approaches to enable COs to cover the costs of technical assistance.
- **UN PBF:** In the past, the PBF has financed a joint bi-national program between Ecuador and Colombia. It seems that the PBF is not interested in submitting a second phase, and that the Colombia office is in negotiations with the Fund to submit other proposals. At the moment a joint proposal between UNDP, UNODC and UN Women is being developed exclusively for Ecuador for US\$3 million.

The opportunities include the following:

- **Bilateral cooperation programs:** the opportunity has been identified to enter into dialogue with at least 5 bilateral donors, whose agenda has significant convergence with UN Women's agenda.
- **Binational programs:** it has been identified the opportunity and willingness on the part of the Colombian office to proceed in an alliance regarding programs that link the EVAWG among the population in a situation of human mobility on both sides of the border, as well as to consider proposing a joint agenda regarding women environmental defenders, an area in which Ecuador's experience Women and Climate Change could be nourished by the work with women defenders of UN Women in Colombia.
- **Technical assistance plan for the government:** Ecuador is the first country in the region to engage in a dialogue with the government for the design and signing of a Technical Assistance Plan. In addition, a dialogue has been developed with the Ministry of Human Rights for the signing of a cooperation agreement to support the violet centres promoted by the current government, through which the Ministry of Human Rights would transfer to UN Women a sum of around US\$5 million.
- **Binational programs:** the EU Delegation in Ecuador seems interested in continuing the work carried out through the Spotlight Initiative. If there are no resources for a second phase, the Secretariat is interested in seeking resources in the Multiannual Indicative Plan (MIP). The EU Delegation would be interested in deepening cooperation with UN Women in the area of violence, gender and disability.

Finally, the risks associated with resource mobilization can be summarized as follows:

- **Financial constraints** represented by the gap between expanded outreach and investments by government donors and other contributors. Data show that women are mainly left behind, with a huge opportunity cost.
- **Organizational stress** due to the high level of effort involved in managing a wide range of partnerships, which do not always produce the expected financial return.
- **Reputational stagnation**, which occurs when current and potential partners view the organization as uncoordinated, lacking capacity to deliver or report on programming, and with problems of effectiveness or efficiency.
- **Country not prioritized by multilateral funds:** for the period 2022-2026, the possibility for the Ecuador ECO to apply for multilateral funds from the PBF is reduced. The country is not eligible and the continuity of cooperation with the Colombia office in this area is uncertain.

- Similarly, a favourable scenario for partnership opportunities with the Joint SDG-Fund, the MPTF and the IFIs has not been found for the time being. The Ecuador ECO's application to these types of resources will have to be based on reactive models and in response to calls for proposals, under the coordination of the RCO in the country.

For the four-year period, the **global mobilization target for ECO is US\$ \$10,870,000**, with a yearly average of US\$ \$2,717,500.

Table n. 5: Resource mobilization targets, per year

WP	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
NON-CORE TBM	\$640,000	\$2,800,000	\$3,200,000	\$4,230,000	\$10,870,000

11. Communication and advocacy

During the last two years, ECO has strengthened its role as a leader on issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in the country with a high-level advocacy capacity. ECO has made an enormous effort to open new scenarios for action in the country, the areas of greatest growth and interest have been in the private sector and in areas such as conservation and climate change, humanitarian assistance and peace and security processes.

These scenarios require the development of new lines of communication and narratives through which ECO will approach its audiences with different purposes, whether these are to inform or support processes of social and behavioural change.

In this context of constant change and a certain level of confrontation, UN Women must reposition itself in the public scene so that its status as an international organization and global authority on issues related to women's rights is understood from a broad and global perspective as a supportive entity for the state, government and civil society focused on the rights of women. Also, UN Women's communications exercise and actions should highlight its coordinating and articulating mandate both within the UN System and with external partners and counterparts.

UN Women has a high communicational capital from being an agency of the United Nations System and from the specificity of its mandate, which allows, among other things, to express messages in a consistent and systematic manner. The diversity of UN Women's audiences requires the organization to identify the nature of communications, media and messages in a very accurate manner to avoid exhausting efforts in actions that will not contribute to achieving the objectives set for each of the thematic areas.

The priority areas for the current programming cycle respond to the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda towards social, environmental and economic sustainability of the countries. The innovative actions to be taken will revolve focus on the five areas that bring together the SDGs: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships, and the vision of the National Development Plan 2021 - 2025 "Creating Opportunities".

UN Women's global communications strategy developed in 2016 stated as goal: "UN Women's communications and public advocacy advance gender equality and women's empowerment as key

issues in the Sustainable Development Agenda and strengthen UN Women's role as the global authority in this context"⁴⁹.

Therefore, the following strategic objectives are proposed for the communications of ECO, which contribute to achieving the desired goal:

1. Disseminate information, knowledge and actions related to the organization's lines of work in Ecuador, prioritizing those in which UN Women has yet to consolidate its authority (peace and security, climate change).
2. Increase the visibility of UN Women as a reference on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment through its communication channels and media appearances, also leveraging the positive results of innovative UN joint programmes.
3. Increase public awareness of gender equality and women's rights goals and UN Women's role in achieving them.
4. Disseminate available information on the situation of women in Ecuador and on effective methodologies to accelerate gender equality (knowledge products).
5. Propose / Suggest new behaviours oriented to the construction of equality between women and men.
6. Contribute to resource mobilization efforts through the management of communication, reputation and knowledge generated by the office.

These objectives will be achieved through the following methods:

- Public articulation between discourse and programmatic action; development of positions (position papers - statements) on issues of interest in the national conjuncture, contribute integration to UN System positions regarding gender equality and women's right in Ecuador.
- Participation in planning and programme projects design from the communications for development and social change perspectives to ensure that all programmatic initiatives include the strategic communications lines.
- Identification and dissemination of relevant and striking stories that can show the work, results and impact of the organization in the lives of women.
- Creation and dissemination of strategic alliances with organizations and individuals that can expand UN Women's visibility.
- Design and implementation of a consistent and systematic narrative on women's human rights; women's contributions in science, culture, politics, economics, conservation, peace and other spheres of life.
- Coordination with other UN agencies, funds and programs to identify common goals, actions and messages that can highlight the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the actions of the UN in Ecuador.

In order to achieve the goal, set out in the UN communication strategy, the following target audiences have been identified both inside and outside the UN Women ECO:

⁴⁹ UN Women (2016) UN Women Communications Strategy 2016-2020.

Internal audiences: a) The organization's headquarters through the focal points of the campaigns and global programs; b) UN Women's regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean, c) The agencies of the United Nations System in Ecuador, d) Country office staff.

Communication with these audiences is intended to raise awareness of the work of the Country Office, as well as to achieve greater dissemination of its messages at the regional and global levels and, finally, to improve the articulation of discourse between the agencies of the system and the programmatic efforts of the organization.

External audiences: a) Women's civil society organizations, b) Governments at the national, provincial and municipal levels, c) Potential donors and corporate partners in the country, d) The media.

In this context, communication is focused on the construction of strategic alliances that allow not only the dissemination and appropriation of the organization's discourses, but also the incidence in the construction of public policies in favour of women's rights and, at the same time, expand the donor base for the organization at the national level.

There is an intermediate audience made up of the Civil Society Advisory Group and its participants, who are people linked to academia and civil society organizations, who have the possibility of transferring information and messages from UN Women to their organizations and vice versa, and who by the nature of their functions should know UN Women's information in greater detail in order to disseminate it properly.

12. Key risks and risk mitigation

For the implementation of the ECO Strategic Note 2023-2026, the following risks have been identified according to the specific context of Ecuador, as well as strategic, operational, financial and security issues that the office should not lose sight of:

12.1 Contextual risks and mitigation strategy

There is political unrest due to the existing fracture in the national government between the executive and legislative branches and also due to political, social and economic measures, aggravated by the upcoming electoral process for local authorities.

In this regard, although the Care Law is in line to begin discussion, there does not seem to be sufficient support to promote it and finalize the process in the short or medium term, as it is not a priority on the public agenda. However, the advantage that exists and that for now can mitigate the risk is that there is a package of inputs for public policies, as well as SDG antecedents with local care models. The greatest risk is that local governments will leave in the short term.

In fact, the rotation of personnel within government institutions makes it more difficult to institutionalize training processes for civil servants. In addition, sometimes when local governments change, they do not give continuity to previous processes, which generates a risk of local-national articulation to prevent public policies from losing the possibility of being sustained over time. For this aspect, it would be important to review the possibility of creating mandatory courses and replication processes.

Violence in spaces of political participation continues because there are no protection actions in local participation processes and the fulfilment of the quota is not reflected in local government agendas.

For electoral issues ECO are working to support women candidates for their adequate political participation in joint initiatives to promote peaceful elections and good transparent electoral processes and with advocacy and advisory actions in conflict prevention of the UNCT, which allows us to incorporate measures in the electoral context. Design work plans with local governments in the first months of the year and ensure their implementation in the first semester. Partnerships are crucial to face the risks described above. Although important efforts will be sustained to provide technical advice for normative, policy and legislative reforms at national level, UN Women is focusing a large part of its country program to implement strategies at the local level, involving province and municipal level governments. This focus will increase UN Women's capacity to directly contribute to women's rights, especially across the most excluded and left-behind groups, and it will diminish the risk associated with national political instability.

In addition, the government does not seem to be compatible with a labour rights agenda, but there is the possibility of a labour reform that would make rights more flexible. It is important to mention that the government promotes the idea of a Violet Economy that talks about closing wage gaps, mainly for women working in the informal sector.

Fiscal cuts and discussion of the 2022 budget proforma, which includes reductions in social issues such as child development and care could affect to the beneficiaries of UN Women projects. In this regard, ECO CO works to advocate with authorities and counterparts that manage resources so that they can redirect resources to substantive investments for gender equality. At the moment, within the framework of the Technical Assistance with the government, new funds are being sought with innovative sources of financing. This plan began in 2021 and has a duration of 2 years, so the response plan to this risk will be extended until 2023.

There are risks of social conflict, in which Indigenous population are currently active in social movements within the framework of sustainable production and consumption processes. But there have also been violent reactions to the promotion of gender equality, or new patterns of behaviour and changing social norms, without sufficient resources to generate a structural change.

In this regard, it is difficult to measure this change at the national level, so it is currently carried out on perception studies: xenophobia, discrimination, etc. But the idea is to improve alliances with academia for measurement and evidence gathering processes.

12.2 Strategic risks and mitigation strategy

To remain relevant in Ecuador, UN Women does not only have to rely exclusively on resource mobilization. Its high-level advocacy capacity and highly qualified personnel to provide technical assistance on legislative and policy reforms at the highest level are elements that need to be sustained. UN Women will need to strongly diversify its pipeline, increasing the participation in global call for proposals, participating in UN joint initiatives and exploring further partnerships with national institutions.

At the national level, UN Women has begun bilateral negotiations with several Embassies and donors; at the same time increasing the coordination of the international community participating in the MEGECI with the purpose of establishing a common agenda that will get the buy-in of different international partners. In parallel, the Office is mapping opportunities at the global level (Trust Funds) to recognize the upcoming calls for proposals. The team is drafting PRODOCs to constitute a

project portfolio in each strategic area to have proposals that could be rapidly adjusted to emerging requests from donors. The Office is also approaching non-traditional donors, such as small, decentralized cooperation offices, to access other financing opportunities like cost sharing initiatives with National Government as part of the technical assistance planned in 2022.

Joint programmes have become the main programmatic delivery mechanism, representing 44% of the non-core budget in 2020, for this reason it is particularly important to maintain adequate coordination among the agencies of the UN agencies, as there may be a risk of losing strategic alliances and donors.

Covid-19 Pandemic and the change of authorities can affect the local implementation of large projects such as: the Spotlight Initiative and the PRM funded project. Nevertheless, as mitigation strategy project implementations plans takes into account the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Agreements with local CSO (PA) are being planned to keep the implementation rhythm according to plan but avoiding activities that could constitute a risk for the project team and the communities. Technical support and institutional capacity building have been largely migrated to remote assistance modalities: online trainings, online fora, online technical support. Avoid massive events, prioritizing small ones to those that are strictly necessary.

Also, anti-women's rights ultra-conservative movement, in addition to creating confusion and resistance to the advancement on gender equality, can curb policies related to GEEW and even generate setbacks on acquired rights. For this matter, it is important to generate clear information and messages based on international human rights standards in a simple language that mobilize partners and allies in the defence of gender equality and women's rights, that promote the inclusion of gender advocates in discussion fora and that deliver information to media and opinion leaders to create a critical, social and institutional mass in defence of women's rights.

12.3 Operational risks and mitigation strategy

In this regard it is important to notice that UN Women staff have not yet achieved work life balance, as they are saturated with overwork, so the performance of the personnel affects the expected results in time and quality. As mitigation strategy it has been planned to make arrangements with staff to access minimal stress management sessions with the LAC counsellor. Plan periodic bimonthly - quarterly staff integration activities. Internal communication plan to promote compliance with telework hours, especially in meetings or collaborative work.

Also, the outbreak of COVID-19 could have a significant impact on the ability of the organization to maintain its operations, to meet the objectives as defined in the Annual Work plan, and to ensure the welfare of personnel. COVID-19 is also having an impact on the stress and perception of burn-out of UN Women staff that might affect productivity, wellbeing and teamwork. For this, it is important to motivate staff to access the stress management sessions with stress counsellors to enhance psychological and mental health.

12.4 Fiduciary & safeguarding risks and mitigation strategy

Most significant risks on this regard for the ECO are the inefficiencies, reputational risks, donors' mistrusts, or national counterparts' mistrust in the capacities of the institution. This have been mitigated with the segregation of duties and responsibilities (procure to pay cycle). Review of TOR/Specifications by Operations and Head of Program Include external specialists (and members of other agencies) in the technical panels and in L/R PRC meeting. Training and orientation to all concerned Orientation on Fraud and Corruption Awareness & Ethics training Compliance to conflict-of-interest procedures and guidelines.

Also, increasing cases of harassment detected in the work with humanitarian partners and in projects in the territories. The mitigation strategy for this risk is to work with women's partners and communities and sensitize them about harassment in humanitarian action. To put partners in contact with each other in the territory so that territorial teams can be formed to work together on gender issues and not as isolated initiatives.