



WORKSHOP ON

**DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN PRACTICE:
APPLYING THE PARIS DECLARATION TO ADVANCING
GENDER EQUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

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**Session C - Discussant
Ownership and Alignment**

**The Budget as a Human Rights Instrument – Democratising the Fiscal Debate in
Ecuador**

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The Budget as a Human Rights Instrument
- Democratising the Fiscal Debate in Ecuador –

- 1) A collective effort at national and local levels of:
 - Government (executive branch)
 - Legislature and political parties
 - Diverse sectors of civil society
 - UNICEF and UN System

- 2) Key accomplishments (at national and local levels):
 - Opening up the fiscal debate beyond Ministry of Finance and select group of experts, to society as a whole
 - Empowering society to participate meaningfully
 - Establishing mechanisms for broad-based dialogue and consensus on key priorities around children and development
 - Developing technical and communicational tools for understanding and monitoring the budget and its execution, including geographic distribution vs. needs, and impact of expenditures
 - Positioning universality of rights and equity as key issues in fiscal debate
 - Achieving significant and sustained increases in social spending despite economic crisis

- 3) Key Paris principle: national ownership, interpreted as:
 - Commitment of government and diverse sectors of civil society to common human rights and development goals
 - Based on process of dialogue and consensus building
 - Founded on strengthened capacity of institutions for democratic governance and capacity of society to participate in policy making
 - Backed up by allocation of national resources

- 4) Role of UNICEF and UN (in words of Ecuadorian Ambassador to UN): ‘facilitators of a new social contract based on human rights’:
 - Advocate for internationally agreed human rights principles and development goals
 - Convener of dialogue between diverse stake holders
 - Mobiliser and facilitator of participation by diverse national actors
 - Technical assistance
 - Continuity of effort in times of instability and change

- 5) The history, 1999 – present:

- Started by UNICEF with full support of Government as an attempt to protect social spending during worst moments of economic crisis (late 1999)
- Expanded into process of civic education and participation in budgetary and fiscal issues at national and local levels
- Based on conceptual framework that sees ultimate aim of budget and fiscal policy as universal fulfilment of rights, starting with children, e.g., all children with decent health care, all children in school
- Technical and communicational tools developed to help make the budget understandable to all, particularly its role as an instrument for guaranteeing rights
- Mechanisms developed for dialogue, participation and consensus building, directly on budgets as well as other related issues:
 - National Dialogue on Budget, organized by Congress with support of UNICEF and UNDP
 - Citizens' Observatory of Children's Rights focused on Child Rights Index
 - Citizens' Observatory of Fiscal Policy
 - CSO Grupo Faro undertaking analysis of geographic and pectoral distribution of social spending
 - Social Contract for Education
- Social participation progresses from debate on budget to definition of social policy priorities, e.g. Ten Year Plan for Education
- All of the above, aided by prominent and sustained media coverage, created a political and social momentum toward protecting and increasing social spending
- Sustained and significant increases in social expenditures in the local and national levels (national: from \$629 million in 1999 to \$3,222 in 2007) as well as better and more equitable distribution
- Improvements in social indicators including Child Rights Index, school enrolment and learning achievement (e.g. Child Rights Index for 0-5: 3.9 in 2002 to 4.3 in 2004)

6) Lessons learned

- National ownership is not just about formal governmental plans – it is about collective ownership and commitment of society as a whole
- This requires broad-based and plural dialogue and consensus building –this is a political process
- Children and their rights are an ideal entry point for promoting dialogue and consensus building, which can then be expanded to more contentious issues
- National ownership can and should be developed at both national and local levels

- Social participation can and should be oriented toward strengthening institutional capacity and producing viable policies and programmes
- The United Nations, with its impartiality and representation of universal values, can play an important convening and facilitation role

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