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NATIONAL LEVEL IMPLICATIONS OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION IN ECUADOR

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Preface

Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals is a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since its inception in 2012, it has served as an open platform to provide structured inputs from the global South into the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, with a view to address the 'knowledge asymmetry' and 'participation deficit' that usually afflict such global discussions.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was finally adopted at the Seventieth Session of the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015 by the member states. With the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) placed as oncoming global development priorities, *Southern Voice* is currently working to examine national experiences in meeting the early challenges of delivering the Agenda 2030.

The research programme titled *National Level Implications of Implementation of SDGs* is based on call for proposals among its network members, and through a peer process eleven country studies were commissioned for nine countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. The broad areas of concern of the country papers are the following: (i) investigate the means of mainstreaming the SDGs into national planning process, within the context of its national priorities; (ii) explore the adequacy of coordination, management and leadership of the SDG implementation process, including the monitoring and evaluation mechanism; (iii) examine the adequacy of financing and other specific means of implementing the SDGs; (iv) investigate the extent of partnerships and stakeholder participation, including institutional arrangements for implementing the SDGs; and (v) evaluate the capacity of the national statistical agencies and other data-related issues.

This country paper titled **National Level Implications of SDG Implementation in Ecuador** is the fourth of the eleven country studies to be published under the Southern Voice Occasional Paper Series. The study has been authored by *Ms Marcela Morales*, Head Researcher and Research Coordinator and *Mr Juan José Herrera*, Project Coordinator of the Extractive Industries Program at Fundación para el Avance de las Reformas y las Oportunidades (Grupo FARO); *Ms Mireya Villacís Taco*, Project Manager in Latin America for the Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) and the Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA); and *Ms Vanessa Gutiérrez Reyes*, a Legal freelance consultant in Ecuador.

The study highlights some major development challenges while showing concerns regarding their impacts on the country's SDG strategies. Specific challenges related to SDG implementation such as economic crisis, lack of coordination, technical capacity, and limited non-government stakeholder participation are also identified. It suggests innovation, transfer of new technology for better coordination and technical capacity building as well as enhancement of monitoring mechanisms in accomplishing the SDGs.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the support of The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation towards *Southern Voice*, particularly of *Dr Ruth Levine*, Programme Director and *Ms Sarah Lucas*, Programme Officer of the Global Development and Population Programme, at the Hewlett Foundation.

In connection to the publication of this paper, contribution of *Ms Umme Shefa Rezbana*, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and the focal point at the Southern Voice Secretariat for overseeing

the programme is highly appreciated. *Ms Tarannum Jinan*, Administrative Associate, CPD is acknowledged for providing useful contribution in following-up of the country papers. *Ms Nahela Nowshin*, Programme Associate (Publication), CPD provided assistance in processing of the publication. I would also like to thank *Ms Erin Palmer* for her editorial inputs and feedback.

Hoping that the paper will be a useful addition to the ongoing discussion on challenges of implementing SDGs in developing countries.

Dhaka, Bangladesh
October 2016

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This study contributes to the understanding of the implications of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation by presenting and analysing the case of Ecuador, based on lessons learned from implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In general, the country will have to enhance its existing mechanisms to monitor the accomplishment of the SDGs in order to identify the areas where it will require further attention and more efforts, such as maternal and child mortality, gender equity and sustainability. It is also important and necessary to take full advantage of the existing institutional capacities and identify areas for improvement. In this sense, the monitoring process of the SDGs will have to include higher participation levels from institutions at the national level and stronger coordination with sub-national governments to observe the implementation and adaptation of goals and targets to the local realities. Among the main challenges for the country are the financial issues. A possible economic crisis might affect the country's priorities in terms of funding and might have an impact on the adoption of the SDGs.

This paper examines five key areas as a basis for further discussion and deeper analysis such as the integration of the SDGs in the national planning process; coordination, management and leadership; adequacy of financing and other means of implementation; partnership and stakeholder participation; and the capacity of national statistical agencies.

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Acronyms

CAF	Development Bank of Latin America (English)
CEDA	Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (English)
CERES	Ecuadorian Center for Social Responsibility (English)
CONGOPE	Consortium of Autonomous Provincial Governments of Ecuador (English)
COOTAD	Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (English)
C40	Cities Climate Leadership Group
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EU	European Union
FFLA	Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano
FLAR	Latin American Reserve Fund (English)
GAD	Decentralized Autonomous Government
GIZ-KWF	German Technical Cooperation Agency (English)
GNI	Gross National Income
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEC	National Institute of Statistics and Census (English)
MAGAP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture and Fisheries (English)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NDPPS	National Decentralized Participatory Planning System
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPGL	National Plan for Good Living
NSO	National Statistics Office
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PARIS21	Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEN	National Statistics System (English)
Senagua	National Secretariat of Water (English)
Senplades	National Secretariat for Planning and Development (English)
SRI	Internal Revenue System (English)
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

National Level Implications of SDG Implementation in Ecuador

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1. Introduction

A new global agenda to end poverty by 2030 and pursue a sustainable future was adopted unanimously by the 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN) on 25 September 2015. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) is an ambitious agenda framed around 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. The SDGs attempt to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and achieve what they were not able to accomplish by balancing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Like many other developing countries, Ecuador is currently facing the challenges and opportunities offered by the post-2015 agenda. Ecuador's experience of implementing the MDGs has been mixed. On one hand, the country has managed to achieve significant progress in terms of reducing poverty, and improving health and education services; on the other hand, gaps remained in terms of gender equality, quality of social services, or capacities at the national and local level.

Now, at the verge of a new international process that will require the commitment of governments, civil society and international partners alike, these lessons are more important than ever to ensure that the SDGs can be fulfilled. It is increasingly important to understand how key actors can best tackle the challenge of integrating the 'universal' SDGs into their national agendas.

Ecuador's efforts towards the SDGs are framed within the country's development philosophy of *Good Living*. *Buen Vivir* or *Good Living* is an Ecuadorean constitutional principle based on the indigenous concept of *Sumak Kawsay*. This concept puts the human being at the centre of the state's development strategy, and is based on notions of interculturality, diversity and environmental sustainability. The public policy instrument that contains these principles and brings them into practice is the National Plan for Good Living (NPGL), a strategic planning document that sets the national priorities for a period of five years.

Ecuador's actions to achieve the MDGs were rooted within the NPGL for two periods: 2009-2013; 2013-2017. The goals set up by the NPGL were aligned with the targets established by the MDGs and so was its achievement: the country's official position maintained that the fulfillment of the goals of the NPGL would result in the fulfillment of the MDGs since the national priorities set up higher targets and quotas than those established by the MDGs. The national targets were therefore more ambitious than those established by the UN, and in some cases, included additional indicators for measuring these targets (Senplades, 2014).

As the SDG process is being launched, countries around the world will have to start deciding how to adopt the ambitious new development agenda into their national realities. In the case of Ecuador, it is

important to identify and analyse how the state and its various institutions will articulate their works in order to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda.

It is in this context that the present study seeks to provide an initial analysis on the national level implications of SDG implementation in Ecuador as an input for further discussion between stakeholders at the national and local level on how the implementation process can be improved this time around. The objectives set up for this study include:

- Understanding the challenges of incorporating the SDGs in Ecuador's national planning process and formulating various implementation strategies for the local level, keeping in view the national priorities;
- Analysing and anticipating how intra-governmental coordination and monitoring will take place during the SDG implementation process in Ecuador;
- Assessing the capacity of the national statistical agencies and the availability and quality of data related to the implementation process of the SDGs in Ecuador;
- Examining the adequacy of the financing mechanisms and other means of implementation of the SDGs in the country.

The paper is organised into seven sections. Section 1 presents the methodology used for this study. Section 2 examines the extent to which the SDGs have been mainstreamed into the national planning process in view of Ecuador's national priorities. Section 3 assesses the country's preparation for and capacity to coordinate, manage and lead the implementation process of the SDGs, including arrangements for a monitoring mechanism at the national and local level. Section 4 explores the crucial role of partnership, stakeholder participation and institutional arrangements in the implementation of SDGs. Section 5 assesses the capacity of national statistical agencies and other data-related issues that will be critical to measuring progress. Section 6 looks at the adequacy of financing and other means of implementation for the SDGs in Ecuador. Finally, Section 7 summarises the study's conclusions and makes recommendations that are intended to provide a basis for further discussion and deeper analysis as the SDG implementation process moves forward.

Methodology

This study took place between June and November 2015, and the data used in the analysis were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. At the time of the study, Ecuador had only begun the process of socialising the recently approved SDGs, and only limited information were available on the adoption strategies for the SDGs. In order to bridge this gap, this study followed a mixed research methodology based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Primary Sources

Under this study, a group discussion group was carried out with key stakeholders (13 participants) from the private and public sectors in September 2015. The objective of the discussion the views and perspectives of representatives from the academia, the public and the private sectors and the civil society regarding the SDG process in the country, and the challenges and opportunities it represented for Ecuador. Representatives from the following institutions attended this session:

- National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC by its Spanish acronym)
- National Secretariat for Planning and Development (Senplades)
- UN Global Compact, Ecuador
- Ecuadorian Center for Social Responsibility (CERES)
- United Nations Development Programme, Ecuador (UNDP)
- European Union (EU)
- Independent researchers and civil society representatives (Grupo FARO, Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano (FFLA), and Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental (CEDA).

Additionally, in-depth interviews were carried out with selected representatives from various sectors of society to further delve into the information gathered during the group discussion. Follow-up interviews were carried out with representatives from:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Education
- Municipality of the Metropolitan District of Quito
- Consortium of Autonomous Provincial Governments of Ecuador (CONGOPE)
- Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano

Secondary Sources

In order to validate the views from the participating actors in the group discussion and interviews, additional analysis of secondary sources was carried out. Secondary sources at this stage included official planning documents (i.e. NPGL), Ecuador's official position papers presented during the SDG negotiation process, and other related documents and data available in public sources of information.

2. Integration and Mainstreaming of the SDGs in the National Planning Process

In Ecuador, the SDGs are seen as crucial objectives that are also embedded in the Constitution and the NPGL, Ecuador's national development plan. By using these frameworks as the basis for the adoption and integration of the MDGs and the SDGs, Ecuador has managed, not without challenges, to articulate these goals into its own understanding of national development and growth.

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador of 2008 links the national planning process directly with ensuring citizens' rights. In this regard, Article 3 of the Constitution stipulates national development planning as one of the primary duties of the state, together with poverty eradication, promotion of sustainable development, and equitable distribution of resources and wealth, in order to achieve *Buen Vivir* or Good Living. It is important to mention that the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 was the first in the world to recognise the Rights of Nature, reflecting a holistic vision of sustainability, as it acknowledges the importance of protecting nature in order to live in a healthy environment.

Ecuador presents this notion of Good Living as an alternative proposal to the traditional concept of development. Good Living is a constitutional principle based on the indigenous concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, which entails a vision of the world centred on the human being as part of the natural and social environment. The means to implement this principle are set out in the NPGL (2013-2017) (Presidency of the Republic of Ecuador, 2015). The NPGL aims to maximise the social benefits for Ecuadorians in order to eradicate poverty and achieve greater social inclusion, and it is built around the concepts of cultural and natural diversity, human rights, gender equality, harmony and solidarity (Senplades, 2013a).

Ecuador's national priorities for the period between 2013 and 2017 are set out in the NPGL, which outlines the country's development goals, policies and targets, as presented in Table 1.

According to Article 280 of Ecuador's Constitution, the observance of the NPGL is mandatory for the public sector, and it is considered the key instrument that frames all public policies, programmes and projects, programming and implementation of the state budget, and investment and allocation of public resources in the country. The NPGL is approved by the National Planning Council, the superior organisation of the National Decentralized Participatory Planning System (NDPPS). This system is formed by a set of processes, entities and instruments that allow the interaction of different institutional and social actors to organise and coordinate development planning at all levels of the government. A detailed explanation of how the NDPPS functions will be provided in the next section.

Table 1: Ecuador's National Objectives Set Out in the NPGL (2013-2017)

National Objectives for Good Living	
Objective 1	Consolidate democratic governance and construct the people's power
Objective 2	Foster social and territorial equity, cohesion, inclusion and equality in diversity
Objective 3	Improve people's quality of life
Objective 4	Build citizen capacities and potential
Objective 5	Build spaces for social interaction and strengthen national identity, diverse identities, pluri-nationality, and interculturality
Objective 6	Consolidate the transformation of the judicial system and reinforce comprehensive security, with strict respect for human rights
Objective 7	Guarantee the Rights of Nature and promote environmental sustainability globally
Objective 8	Consolidate the social and solidary economic system, sustainably
Objective 9	Guarantee dignified work in all forms
Objective 10	Promote transformation of the productive structure
Objective 11	Ensure the sovereignty and efficiency of strategic sectors for industrial and technological transformation
Objective 12	Guarantee sovereignty and peace, enhancing strategic insertion worldwide and Latin American integration

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Senplades (2013b).

Ecuador's efforts to achieve the MDGs were based on the NPGL. By the time the MDGs were launched, they were considered as a reference standard by the Ecuadorian government, meaning that the goals and targets set up by the MDGs were considered adequate, but not sufficient to guarantee the necessary equality and development to achieve Good Living (Senplades, 2015). The national targets were therefore more ambitious than those established by the UN, and in some cases, included additional indicators than the ones established to measure the MDGs (Senplades, 2014). This approach towards the MDGs has also shaped the Ecuadorian government's approach towards the SDGs.

The official position regarding the SDGs also reflected the inputs from meetings and consultations held between national institutions, civil society and academia throughout 2013 which were passed along by Ecuador's delegation. The UNDP with the support of the national government conducted consultations across the country where 3,674 people participated in direct consultations and 3,539 participated through the virtual survey "My World 2015" and the results of the consultation process identified several synergies with the NPGL (UNDP, 2013). The following priorities were identified:

- Quality education for all;
- An intercultural and integral health system that includes improving access to sexual and reproductive health services and access to health services for women in rural areas and for disabled people;
- Access to decent work;
- Access to food and food sovereignty;
- Environmental protection and sustainability;
- Access to water, sanitation and decent living conditions.

As a result, Ecuador's participation during the UN's processes to determine the priorities and scope of the SDGs was framed within the consultation process results, and the principles and objectives established in the Constitution and set out in the NPGL. Additionally, Ecuador's official position on the SDGs was based on national objectives articulated and negotiated at the national level by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Senplades, INEC and the Ministry of Environment. The following Table shows the articulation of the 12 objectives of the NPGL and how they fit the criteria for fulfilling the SDGs.¹

¹This analysis has been made based on the current NPGL which will be updated in 2017. However, when the present report was drafted, information on possible changes and adjustments into the plan was not yet available.

Table 2: Articulation between the SDGs and the NPGL Objectives (2013-2017)

SDGs (2015-2030)	NPGL Objectives (2013-2017)
Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	10
Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	3, 7
Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	2, 4, 5, 9
Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	6
Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	7
Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	11
Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	5, 9, 10
Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	10, 11
Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries	12
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	3, 4, 7
Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	7, 11
Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts* *Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change	7
Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	7, 10
Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	7
Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	1, 6
Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	8, 10, 12

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Senplades (2013b) and United Nations (2013).

In general, the NPGL proposes a holistic view of national development that integrates equality, inclusion, social and territorial equity and diversity, improved quality of life, capacity building, regional and global environmental sustainability, and consolidation of social solidarity and economic systems. All these topics match SDG priorities, and as a result this synergy creates a positive framework and useful guidelines for the adoption of the SDGs at the national level. However, the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs remain a challenge for the country in terms of existing capacities, coordination at the local level, and generation of data. These aspects will be discussed in further detail in the following sections.

3. Coordination, Management, Leadership of the SDG Implementation Process and Monitoring Mechanisms

At the centre of the implementation and monitoring process of the SDGs in Ecuador is the NDPPS. The NDPPS is the system formed by a set of processes, entities and instruments that allow the interaction of different institutional and social actors to organise and coordinate planning at all levels. The NDPPS

was the main intra-governmental mechanism within which the MDGs were implemented, monitored and evaluated. The same institutional framework will also be responsible for the implementation and monitoring process of the SDGs in Ecuador.

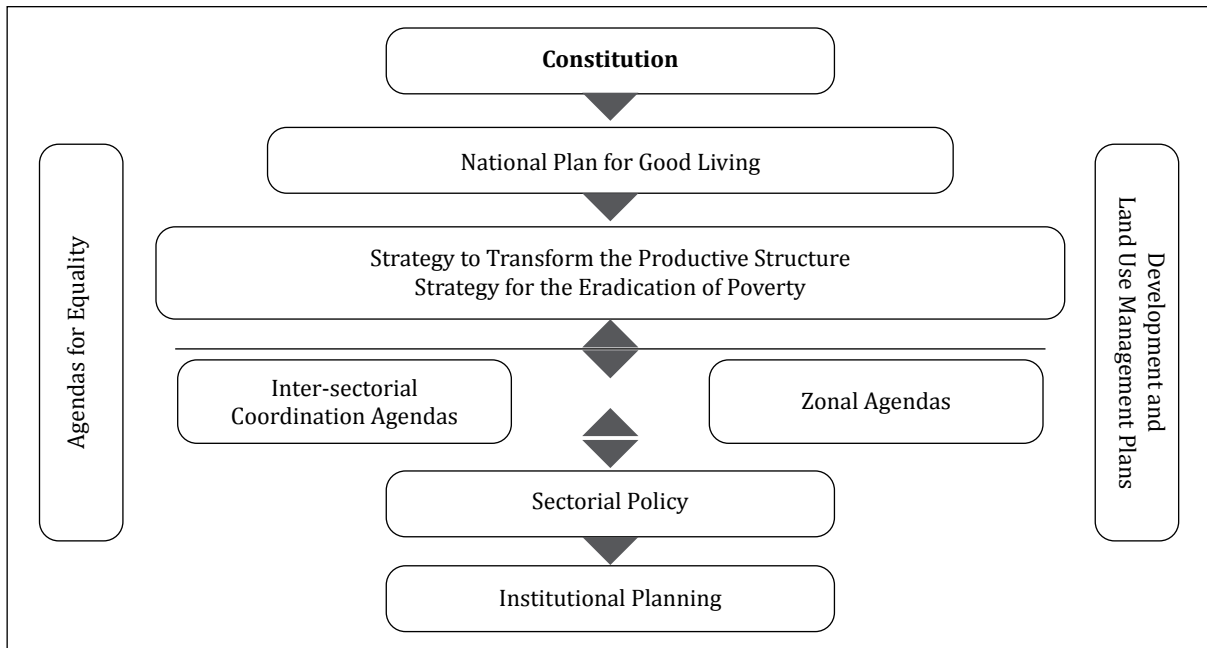
The NDPPS is the main development tool for the planning and prioritisation of public investment to achieve the NPGL objectives. Within this framework, Senplades is the key actor in charge of its functioning. Senplades manages and coordinates the NDPPS, and articulates actions with different public institutions in order to accomplish the national goals. Senplades is also in charge of evaluating the NPGL and presenting the annual compliance report to the Presidency with the inputs of other public entities. As stated by the COOTAD (2010), all public entities must report their progress of compliance with the NPGL to Senplades as a requirement prior to approval of their annual operational plans and budgets. Senplades also chairs the National Information System in order to integrate and consolidate the information related to the NDPPS.

Besides Senplades, the NDPPS is constituted of:

- *National Planning Council*: Formed by the President of the Republic, four representatives of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs by its acronym in Spanish), seven delegates of the Executive Branch, the National Secretary for Planning and Development, the President of the Council for Higher Education, and four citizens elected by the Pluri-national and Intercultural Citizen Assembly for Good Living. This council is responsible for evaluating and approving the National Development Plan – NPGL, and analysing its annual results to establish the necessary corrective measures to optimise the achievement of the national objectives.
- *Technical Secretariat of the NDPPS*: Chaired by Senplades, the Technical Secretariat is responsible for drafting the National Development Plan for consideration by the President of the Republic, with the participation of all levels of government, social and community organisations, the private sector and the citizens.
- *GADs Participation Councils*: The councils participate in the process of elaborating the GADs' development and land use management plans that define the local long-term development policies and strategies. According to the NPGL and the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (COOTAD), the councils are also involved in defining the productive and environmental guidelines and priorities, infrastructure and territorial connectivity, land use and occupation at the local level. GADs must also periodically monitor the goals included in their development plans in order to assess their compliance and establish the necessary corrections or modifications to achieve them. GADs must also report annually on these developments to Senplades.
- *National Equality Councils*: Comprised of the National Councils for gender, inter-generation gaps, disability, human mobility, peoples and nationalities. They are formed by 10 counsellors, advisers, and representatives of state branches and the civil society. These councils formulate the Agendas for Equality that aim to ensure justice and equality for individuals and communities.
- *Citizen Participation Spaces*: These spaces exist both at the national and at the local level. At the national level, different state agencies are in charge of promoting citizen participation through Sectorial Citizens' Councils and public policy observatories. For example, the Pluri-national and Intercultural Citizens' Assembly for Good Living created in 2013 leads these efforts. At the local level, Citizens' Planning Councils and Oversight Committees are jointly coordinated by local actors and authorities.

The NDPPS comprises national, territorial and sectorial instruments (policies, strategies, plans and agendas) for the achievement of national objectives and goals. Diagram 1 outlines these instruments.

The Constitution, the NPGL, the Strategy to Transform the Productive Structure, and the Strategy for the Eradication of Poverty, are the leading planning and implementation mechanisms in the country. Within the NDPPS, three coordination levels are in charge of the *implementation, evaluation and monitoring* of national, inter-sectorial, sectorial and local public policy (Senplades, 2013b):

Diagram 1: Instruments that Articulate the NDPPS in Ecuador

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Senplades (2013b).

1. The *territorial coordination level* allows the goals of the NPGL and the National Territorial Strategy to be brought into the local level for each of the nine planning areas in the country through *Zonal Agendas*. These instruments seek to foster cohesion and territorial integration and contain the guidelines for the development of the territory.
2. The *inter-sectorial coordination level* consists in the processes that horizontally link a set of public entities from different areas (education, health, etc.) and allows for joint national planning by defining objectives and guidelines for inter-sectorial coordination through *Inter-sectorial Coordination Agendas*.
3. The *institutional coordination level* refers to the strategic and operational planning of public institutions, excluding the GADs. This instance regulates the programmatic implementation of public policies through permanent processes and programmes. The coordination instruments at this level are the *Sectorial Policy* and the *Institutional Planning Policy*, which include multiannual and annual planning.

While the NDPPS' structure presents several opportunities to strengthen the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs it also presents challenges, mainly in terms of capacities and internal coordination among the state agencies. However, key actors interviewed during this process indicated that the NDPPS does not yet ensure an appropriate implementation process for the SDGs, mainly because of the lack of technical capacities of the local public entities to follow the national guidelines established by Senplades. Weak coordination within local public dependencies, such as legislative councils and secretariats, was also identified as a barrier for the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.

Existing legal frameworks recognise the importance of intra-institutional coordination. The Constitution of Ecuador and COOTAD indicate that coordination within sectors and territories is mandatory. In this sense, the implementation of the SDGs should follow this coordination premise. For example, goals related to environmental management must be implemented by the Ministry of the Environment in coordination with provincial governments; goals associated with water supply must be implemented by the National Secretariat of Water (Senagua) in coordination with municipal governments; policies to encourage agricultural production must be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Aquaculture, and Fisheries (MAGAP) in coordination with provincial governments, and so on.

In practice though, coordination between local authorities and national public institutions needs to be improved in order to assure an adequate implementation of the SDGs. Interviewed actors mentioned the importance of continuous capacity building and technology transfer from the national to the local level as a strategy to strengthen this relationship. Senplades would be the institution in charge of technically assisting local organisations according to the Organic Code for Planning and Public Finances.

Another challenge identified by key actors who gave inputs for the present study is the limited availability of data to monitor the implementation of the SDGs. This task is especially challenging at the local level. According to a representative of Senplades interviewed under this study in 2015, Ecuador lacks sufficient information to monitor the implementation of the SDGs adequately. This is because data gathering is centralised in the INEC, and data generation at the local level is not adequately produced and gathered. In this sense, monitoring of the SDGs becomes increasingly challenging.

Interviewed actors also consider that current SDG indicators are inadequate to monitor and evaluate the accomplishment of the goals, since in many cases these goals are expressed in qualitative terms and indicators measure quantitative aspects of the goals without fully reflecting their scope. The following examples explain this gap:

- The notion of interculturality is closely related to the consolidation of inclusive and culture sensitive public services. For example, the intercultural health care should “incorporate ancestral and alternative medicine into the National Health System; ensure access to holistic sexual and reproductive health services as a component of people’s right to sexual freedom; guarantee universal, uninterrupted, sustainable, quality access to safe water and to basic sanitation services, with territorial, environmental, social and cultural relevance; among others” (Senplades, 2013b). The indicators to measure these targets focus on maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, HIV, housing, sewage, and access to public water supply networks. In the first focus group discussion carried out during this research, it was widely discussed if these indicators can actually provide proper data to assess the fulfillment of intercultural health care. As in this case, there are other areas that face similar challenges.
- The notion of sustainability is also prominent in the NPGL. The Rights of Nature and policies aimed at promoting environmental sustainability emphasise the “sustainable management of natural resources, participation of people in the management of the resources, renewable energies, and conscious, sustainable, efficient consumption patterns with a criterion of sufficiency within the planet’s limits” (Senplades, 2013b). The NPGL proposes to increase the amount of Ecuador’s territory (both mainland and marine) categorised under “conservation” or “sustainable management,” raise the total area of restored forest, improve bio-capacity and increase the percentage of households with sustainable and environment-friendly practices. However, it does not address consumption pattern indicators, participation, or sustainable management.

The next section will go deeper into the role of the national statistics institutions in generating data that allows to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the SDGs at the national and local level.

4. Partnership, Stakeholder Participation and Institutional Arrangements

Drawing on the lessons it learned from implementing the MDGs, the Government of Ecuador made a concerted effort to include the views and voices of different actors in formulating its plans for the post-2015 development agenda. Since January 2015, Senplades — Ecuador’s focal point for the SDG process, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs — has led a consultation process with key actors at the national level. As previously mentioned, these actors have included not only government bodies, but also representatives of academia and civil society. This represents an innovative and more inclusive approach to defining the SDGs and other priorities that Ecuador is able and willing to include in its national plans.

It is important to consider that in order for development processes to be successful, they need to be participatory not only in the planning phase, but also in their implementation. In this sense, the fulfillment of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets should also be participatory and inclusive, meaning that actors outside the government should also be a part of the process as they all are part of a democratic state. Civil society organisations, academia, companies, international organisations, financial agencies, social movements, communities and citizens should participate in the SDG implementation process. However, to do this, relationships between these actors and public authorities at the national level need to be improved.

Unfortunately, according to the interviews carried out during this study, the current level of participation of civil society is limited, due to governmental restricted measures. Also, there is weak articulation among sectors and institutions, and the actions that each sector is taking are compartmentalised, instead of being comprehensive. Furthermore, interviewed actors believe there is still limited empowerment of the SDGs among citizens, in view of their recent approval and lack of sufficient dissemination.

As said in the previous section, besides the intra-governmental mechanism (NDPPS) there are other mechanisms of local implementation of the SDGs that have gained significance worldwide, and they are not necessarily linked with the national policies. There are several international initiatives and networks working together with Ecuadorian cities and local governments to implement SDGs territorially; they have an international agenda and direct impact on SDG implementation, including commitments for members and monitoring mechanisms. Some of these networks are – the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability), the Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), the Compact of Mayors, and the Global Task Force, among others.

ICLEI, for example, has demonstrated leadership in the local implementation of the SDGs, especially to achieve the targets of SDG 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). It developed the Urban SDG Campaign, through which a proposal for indicators was elaborated to include a territorial dimension in the SDGs and evaluate the urban goals. Moreover, ICLEI selected bottom-up initiatives for monitoring sustainability at the local and sub-national level, which can be used as data source and indicators; such as the Carbon Climate Registry that works as a platform for local governments to report their carbon inventories and climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. As an active member of ICLEI, the local government of Quito is committed to implementing plans and actions to fulfill the SDGs at the local level and to monitor the progress through the proposed mechanisms. Like Quito, other Ecuadorian cities are starting to join these networks, which certainly represent a great opportunity for local implementation of the 2030 Development Agenda.

Another initiative that is starting to show leadership in the implementation of the SDGs in Ecuador is the UN Global Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, which calls public and private actors to align strategies and operations with Ten Principles related to human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption, as well as to take actions that advance societal goals. The Global Compact Network Ecuador was launched during the first "Quito Forum: Responsible Cities and Organizations", on 26 July 2011, aiming to promote the implementation of the Ten Principles, build capacities, develop sustainability policies, and link ongoing national initiatives to the global sustainability movement, becoming an organisation that encourages multi-sectorial dialogue. It is managed by an Executive Board, currently constituting of three non-government organisation (NGO) delegates and three business representatives. Nowadays, there are around 80 participants of the Network in Ecuador, who come from several sectors, such as companies of support services, oil equipment, services and distribution, food producers, financial services, banks, academia and public institutions.

In order to socialise the new Development Agenda in Ecuador, in October 2015 the local Global Compact Network and UNDP held a multi-sectorial constructive dialogue on how companies can contribute to achieving the new SDGs in the country. Signatory organisations, representatives of chambers of commerce, academia, civil society organisations, the Ecuadorian Government and the UN System of Ecuador participated in the meeting, analysing the qualitative evolution of the MDGs to the SDGs, discussing solutions of socio-environmental challenges, reflecting about the value proposition of the Global Compact as a platform to channel business for sustainable development, and the scheme's accountability and transparency in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

5. Capacity of the National Statistics Agencies and other Data-related Issues

The scope and complexity of the SDGs will not only require the commitment of national governments and the availability of funding, but also the necessary means to monitor the advancement of these goals. In this context, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to measure progress and assess the areas where countries will be facing challenges during the next 15 years (ECOSOC, 2016). Under such a circumstance, strong national statistical systems gain renewed relevance within the Agenda 2030 (SDSN, 2015a).

Monitoring and measuring the progress of the SDGs will present important challenges to national statistics agencies worldwide. While the MDGs proposed 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 technical indicators, the SDGs are a set of 17 goals and 169 targets that will definitely represent an important challenge for statistical offices worldwide in terms of data collection and analysis (SDSN, 2015b). Beyond the number of goals, SDG targets are also considered broader than those proposed by the MDGs (United Nations, 2013). Goals that integrate various social, environmental and economic aspects, pose new challenges for monitoring and assessment (ECLAC, 2013). Table 3 shows an example of this.

In order to face these challenges, innovation in the collection of data is crucial: internet, mobile and geographical coding technologies can positively shape the way statistical data is collected and managed (United Nations, 2013). New technologies can reduce the time and cost of data collection (i.e. online surveys), improve accuracy, and ease integration with other information streams. Additionally, new

Table 3: Comparison of MDGs and SDGs in terms of Goals and Targets

Criteria	Goal	Target
MDGs	1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty	1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day
		2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
SDGs	1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere	1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day
		1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
		1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
		1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance
		1.5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters

Source: Authors' elaboration based on SDSN (2015c).

technologies can ease the process of monitoring the SDGs by creating low-cost solutions to ensure the participation of larger segments of the population (SDSN, 2015a).

In Ecuador, the National Statistics System (SEN by its Spanish acronym) is in charge of coordinating the planning, publication and distribution of official statistics and data to inform decision-making in the country (INEC, 2015b). SEN is formed by:

- a. *National Council of Statistics and Census*: the entity in charge of leading and approving the activities carried out by INEC; designing statistics policy at the national level; deciding and approving national census; and
- b. *National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC)*: the entity in charge of executing the decisions taken by the National Council of Statistics and Census, and operates as the main centre of generation and management of statistical information in the country.

In Ecuador the main sources of information are birth and death records, marriage and divorce records, migration records, demographic surveys, and population and housing censuses (Villacís & Carrillo, 2010). Within this framework the INEC produces official data to measure and monitor the achievements of the national objectives (particularly those established by the NPGL) and will also be in charge of gathering data within the framework of the SDGs.

The 17 goals, 169 targets and around 230 indicators (Dunning, 2016) represent important challenges in terms of the amount and quality of data that will have to be gathered during the next 15 years to monitor the evolution of the SDGs at the national and local level in Ecuador. According to a representative of INEC interviewed for this study, Ecuador is currently capable of generating about 70 per cent of the data required for monitoring the SDG indicators. The same representative indicates that INEC is confident that the remaining 30 per cent will be developed during the coming years through national strategies to improve the institution's ability to respond to the SDG challenges.

Another lesson that the MDG process left behind was the importance of developing the capacities of national statistics offices (NSOs) worldwide in order to strengthen the quality of data to measure progress (SDSN, 2015a). In the case of Ecuador, capacity building is also an important aspect to be developed.

The generation of reliable statistical information suffered important setbacks during the 80s and 90s in Ecuador (Villacís & Carrillo, 2010). During this period the lack of solid statistical information had a negative impact on policy making since strategic national and regional decisions were usually made without taking into account statistical data to inform these decisions (INEC, 2015a). Additionally, financial crisis in the country and lack of public funding affected the country's ability to generate data over time. For example, the 2000 Demographic Census was cancelled and it was then held in 2001 with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (Villacís & Carrillo, 2010).

In 2007, the SEN in Ecuador was restructured with strong emphasis on improving the country's ability to generate demographic information and ensure public financing (INEC, 2015). Since then, Ecuador's ability to generate reliable data has been improving over the years. According to the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), Ecuador experienced a 31 per cent improvement in its capacity to generate statistics (the country went from a score of 61 points in 1999 to 80 points in 2009) (PARIS21, 2009).

While data gathering at the national level has seen many improvements over the past years, capacities to gather disaggregated data at the local level still require attention. According to interviewed representatives from INEC, one of the main challenges Ecuador still has to face in terms of data generation is the ability of local governments to register and monitor reliable statistical information at the local level. It was also highlighted by key actors who participated in the interviews that capacity building at the local level (in terms of statistical planning, data management, etc.) is more important

than ever to ensure that local realities are taken into account. Local authorities in Ecuador have the opportunity to become more active during the implementation of the SDGs by being able to “own” statistical data, adapt it to their local circumstances and design strategic actions accordingly.

In the short- and medium-term, another challenge that the NSOs will be facing is related to the difficulty to define in measurable terms the highly qualitative nature of many of the SDGs and its targets (SDSN, 2015b). For example, Target 11.3 is related to the enhancement of *inclusive and sustainable* urbanisation and capacity for *participatory, integrated and sustainable* human settlement planning and management. This target and others among the SDGs entail concepts that, according to interviewed functionaries from INEC, will require discussion in the national and local level to define their meaning when applied in the national context: What does a participatory, integrated and sustainable settlement entail? What does such a settlement look like in Ecuador? Only by having a clear view on the definitions, indicators to measure progress towards that goal can be created.

The SDG process in terms of data generation definitely represents a challenge for INEC in Ecuador and other NSOs around the world. Despite the challenges, the SDG process also presents important opportunities for countries to create and participate in spaces of learning and collaboration to tackle challenges in terms of data generation (SDSN, 2015c). Ecuador currently holds the pro-tempore presidency of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the presidency of the Executive Committee of the Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2014-2015) (Ecuador en Cifras, 2015). These positions of leadership within regional bodies offer Ecuador the opportunity to strengthen collaboration in terms of data generation and skills development with partners in the region, and also to highlight the role of NSOs during the implementation of the SDGs.

6. Adequacy of SDG Financing in Ecuador

According to initial estimates, the SDGs will cost three times as much as the MDGs and will require developing countries to double their public investment (UNRISD, 2015). This will make the SDGs expensive to achieve, especially since they are being implemented with limited foreign aid and in the midst of a global economic slowdown. There are three sources of funding that require special attention by policy makers when it comes to financial means of implementing the SDGs (UNRISD, 2015; Government Spending Watch, 2015):

- *Tax revenues*: Developing countries will need to increase their tax revenues by 10 per cent (compared to an 8 per cent increase for the MDGs).
- *Aid flows*: Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors will need to meet their longstanding pledge to provide official development assistance (ODA) at a rate of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) by 2025.
- *Innovative financing*: Around USD 450 billion a year in environmental taxes, financial transactions, and issuance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Special Drawing Rights will also be required.

The plan of action for financing the SDGs in Ecuador will be aligned with the broader national planning strategy established in the NPGL and the national budget. However, budget priorities traditionally focus mainly on education and health. The 2015 budget was about USD 36 billion, as government expenditures for this period focused primarily on education, health, internal affairs, national defence, communications, and social welfare (Ministry of Finance, 2015). Sectors such as agriculture, urban development, environment, and employment generation (priority areas within SDG framework) accounted for less than 2 per cent of the total expenditures of the budget (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

Within this framework, it is important to note that Ecuador is about to enter a challenging phase of its development that will be shaped by falling oil prices, appreciation of the US dollar, the threat of natural disasters arising from the El Niño phenomena, and the possible eruption of the Cotopaxi volcano

during 2015-2016. These factors will influence policy in the short- and medium-terms, and will also have an impact on the country's strategy for the SDGs. Due to the mentioned economic challenges, budget cuts have already been announced for 2016 (Ecuador's total budget for 2016 is announced to be USD 30 billion, which is 17 per cent lower than that of 2015). Hence it can be easily assumed that the government will prioritise some policy areas over others. Another point to note here is that the country will go through the presidential elections during the first months of 2017, and therefore Ecuador's political arena will definitely have an impact on the policy design process.

The State Budget and its Annual Investment Plan are the best indicators to provide insights into the government's priorities and main sources of funding. The *State Budget* is defined as the tool for the identification and management of the incomes and expenses of all public entities. The *Annual Investment Plan* is a part of the State Budget, and it is defined as the technical and financial tool that contains the prioritised programmes and projects that are fundamental to achieve the government objectives. In this sense, the State Budget can provide insights into the areas where national income is allocated (current and capital expenditures) and the investment plan can shed light on the investment priorities of the government (capital expenditures).

As mentioned, the overall 2015 budget was about USD 36 billion. Moreover, the expected expenditure for the 2015 Annual Investment Plan was USD 8 billion, about 22 per cent of the State Budget (Ministry of Finance, 2015). Table 4 shows the government's priority expenditure areas both for the overall State Budget and for its Annual Investment Plan. This Table shows the sectors where more resources have been allocated. Thus, a relationship can be drawn between government expenditure priorities and the SDGs. There are sectors such as poverty reduction, health, education, energy and infrastructure that are highly important for the government and represent a significant expenditure. Hence, goals related to these sectors will probably have the necessary financial resources to be achieved. However, there are sectors with minimal allocation of funds that might need additional sources of financing.

Table 4: Prioritised Areas of Expenditure – State Budget and Annual Investment Plan

Areas of Attention	State Budget		Annual Investment Plan	
	USD Billion	% of State Budget	USD Million	% of Annual Investment Plan
National Treasure	16.42	45.2	-	-
Internal Affairs	2.03	5.6	364.87	4.5
National Defence	1.91	5.3	294.38	3.6
Education	5.23	14.4	1332.86	16.4
Poverty Reduction	1.12	3.1	139.20	1.7
Health	2.91	8.0	878.05	10.8
Energy	2.11	5.8	2017.26	24.9
Infrastructure	1.11	3.1	937.37	11.5
Others	3.47	9.6	2152.03	26.5
Total	36.31	100.0	8116.02	100.0

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Ministry of Finance (2015).

Poverty reduction (SDG 1) has been one of Ecuador's main priorities over the last ten years. The Ministry of Social Inclusion coordinates related activities and programmes. Its budget in 2015 represented 3 per cent of the national budget and 2 per cent of the Annual Investment Plan (Ministry of Finance, 2015). Education and health have also been priority areas over the last 10 years. Health (SDG 3) represents 8 per cent of the State Budget and 11 per cent of the Annual Investment Plan (Ministry of Finance, 2015), allocated mostly to infrastructure and programmes designed to improve access to services throughout the country. Education (SDG 4) represents 14 per cent of the budget and

16 per cent of the Annual Investment Plan, with expenditures concentrated in infrastructure, capacity building, scholarships, and technology and innovation.

Energy generation has been one of the government’s priorities, particularly to achieve energy self-sufficiency and to expand electric power supply throughout the country. To achieve this goal, the government has invested significantly in hydroelectric development. The Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy leads these efforts, with a budget that represents about 6 per cent of the total national budget and about 25 per cent of the Annual Investment Plan (Ministry of Finance, 2015).

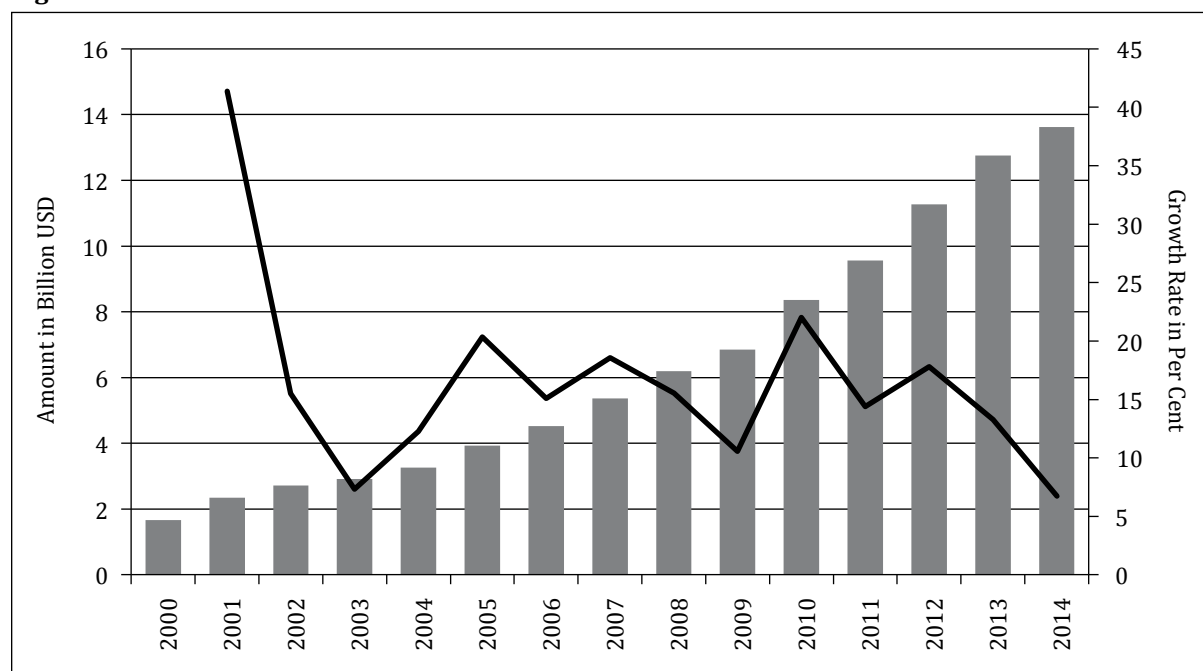
The budget also addresses environmental protection (Goals 13 and 15), but the allocation of funds is very low, representing only 0.5 per cent of the national budget (Ministry of Finance, 2015). The Ministry of Environment oversees the development and implementation of environment policy that focuses on climate change policies. Finally, funding for sensitive areas such as gender inequality (minimal in the budget) still requires attention.

Public spending was the main mechanism that the government used to finance the MDGs. According to the Central Bank of Ecuador, the total spending of the non-financial public sector increased by 347 per cent between 2006 to 2014 (USD 9.9 billion to 44.3 billion). Capital spending increased from USD 1.9 billion in 2006 to 15.4 billion in 2014 (690 per cent). Current spending increased from USD 8 billion in 2006 to 28.9 billion in 2014 (263 per cent) (Central Bank of Ecuador, 2015). The increase in government spending has been supported by significant growth in government revenues, especially from taxes and the oil sector.

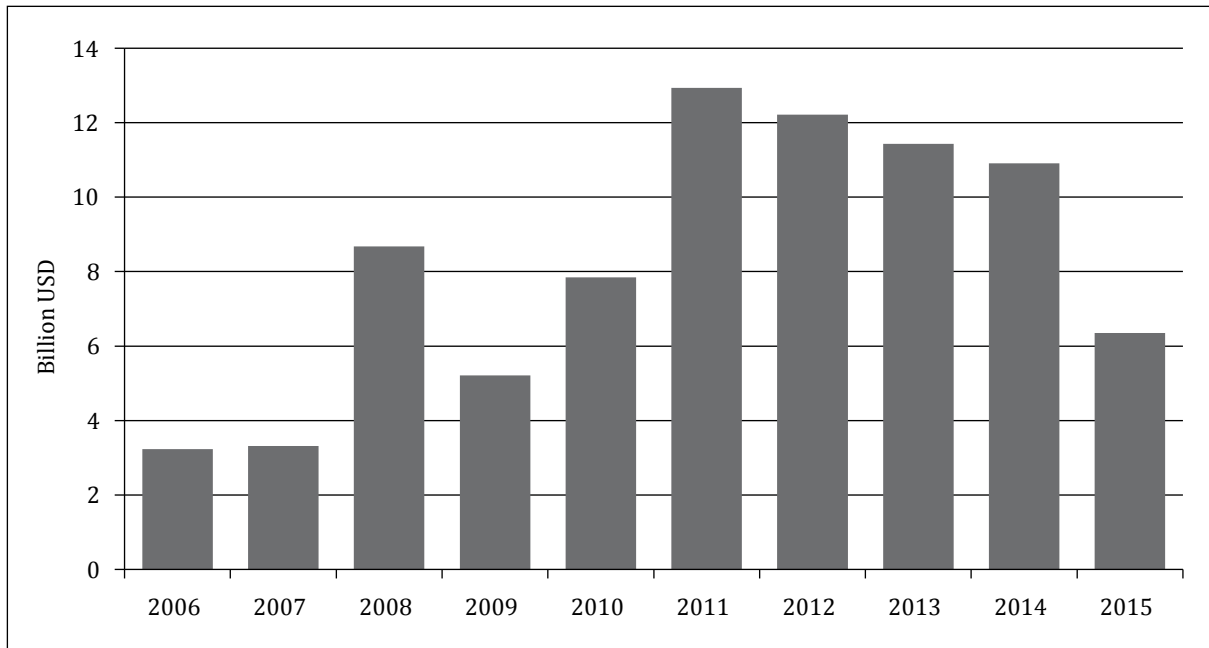
According to Ecuador’s Internal Revenues Service (SRI by its Spanish acronym), between 2005 to 2014, the amount of tax collected increased by about 250 per cent, from USD 3.9 billion to USD 13.6 billion (Internal Revenue System, 2015). Figure 1 outlines the trend in tax collection in Ecuador since 2000, which has grown at an annual rate of greater than 10 per cent for most of the period.

Oil revenues have also increased during the last years due to historic commodities prices. This increase let the government fund additional national programmes and projects that contributed to reduce poverty and the achievement of other MDGs. Oil revenues were higher during the period 2008-2014,

Figure 1: Tax Collection since 2000



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Internal Revenue System (2015).

Figure 2: Non-Financial Public Sector Oil Revenues

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Central Bank of Ecuador (2015).

which is also the period of highest public investment. The non-financial public sector's oil revenues increased by 237 per cent between 2006 and 2014 (Central Bank of Ecuador, 2015). However, as the Figure 2 shows, these revenues are volatile, and hence is the trend of public investment. Future oil prices are forecasted to be around USD 40-50 per barrel, and thus Ecuador will face an important challenge that is to maintain its level of investment with lower oil prices than in previous years.

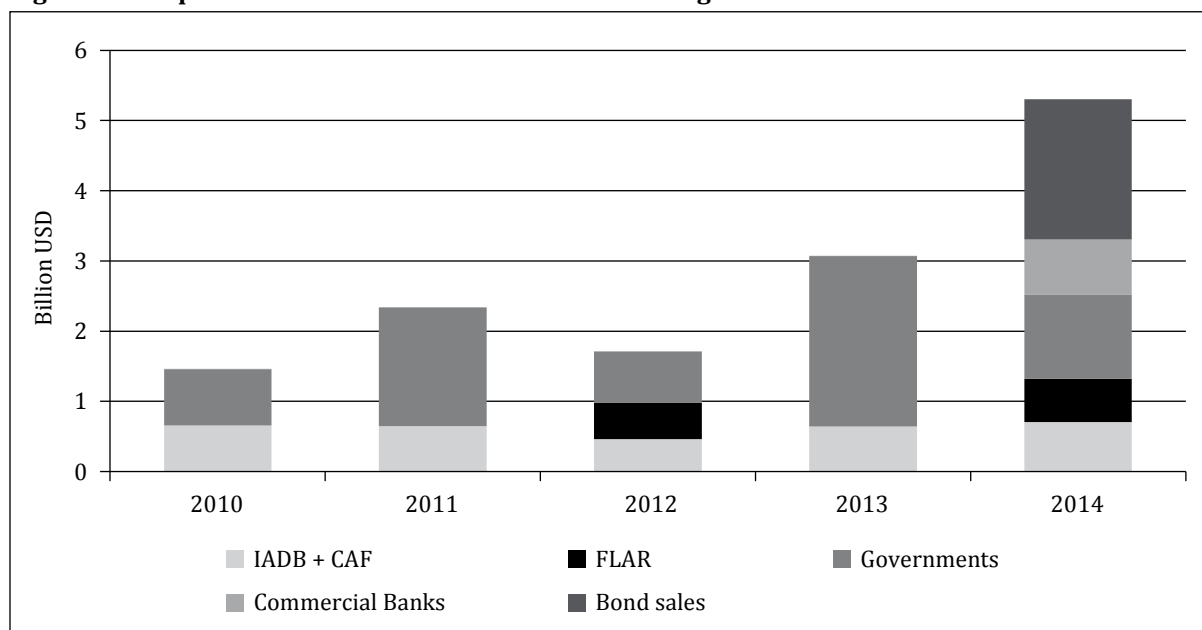
Another key source of funding for the national budget is *financing income*, including internal debt and international funding. In general terms, internal debt comprises financial transfers between the government and public institutions through mechanisms such as internal bond sales. International funding consists of the credits Ecuador receives from international financing institutions (mainly multilateral development banks), international funds, governments, commercial banks and international bond sales (Ministry of Finance, 2014). During 2014, financing income was USD 10,231 million. Of this amount, 39 per cent was internal debt, 52 per cent international funding, and 9 per cent balances from previous periods.

Figure 3 illustrates the composition of international funding Ecuador has received since 2010, showing a significant increase between 2010 to 2014. However, Ecuador's sources of international funding are not diversified since the highest amounts of funding are focused on three sources:

- *Foreign governments*: According to the Ministry of Finance (2014), during 2013 and 2014 the country's major creditors were the governments of China, France and Brazil through loan concessions.
- *Multilateral Development Banks*: Specifically the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), are the second sources of international funding. As Figure 3 shows, Ecuador has obtained about half a billion dollars every year from both during the period 2010-2014.
- *Latin American Reserve Fund (FLAR)*: Ecuador has accessed credits from the FLAR between 2012 and 2014.

2014 was an atypical year regarding international funding since Ecuador returned to the international market through a bond allocation of about USD 2 billion and a credit negotiation with international commercial banks.

Figure 3: Composition of Ecuador’s International Funding

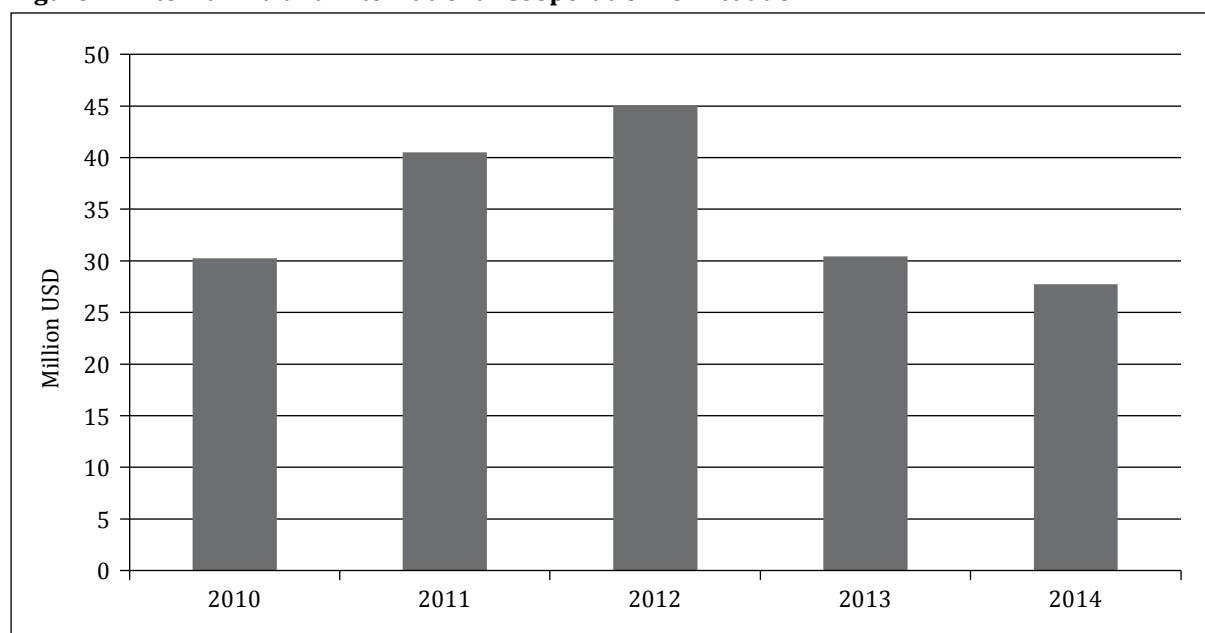


Source: Prepared by the authors based on Ministry of Finance (2014).

External aid (external donations) has been a marginal source of funding for Ecuador. As Figure 4 shows, since 2010 the annual amount of international cooperation funding to Ecuador has not been higher than USD 45 million. This funding comes primarily from the UN, the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GIZ-KWF), and environmental funds (from several donors), among others. According to the Ministry of Finance (2014), most of the external aid received in 2014 (USD 28 million) was allocated to projects in education (53 per cent), environment (19 per cent), and health (13 per cent).

Conditional loans have been commonly used in Ecuador during the last 10 years as another funding mechanism and these are commonly tied to the oil sector. These kinds of loans have become an important source of income for the country, and therefore for funding its programmes and projects. Ecuador has signed several credit agreements, particularly with China, under which it agrees to

Figure 4: External Aid and International Cooperation for Ecuador



Source: Prepared by the authors based on Ministry of Finance (2014).

deliver a specific number of barrels of oil in exchange for cash disbursements. However, the process for negotiating these agreements has been characterised by a lack of transparency and access to information. According to the annual budget execution reports of the Ministry of Finance (2014), the earned income from conditional loans has been USD 538 million in 2010, 1 billion in 2011, 353 million in 2012, 1.7 billion in 2013, 1.8 billion in 2014, and 1.83 billion in 2015, the last year's being the highest.

Ecuador's international policy has shifted towards China as a fundamental financial ally instead of other international financing institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Besides China, international funding focuses on two multilateral development banks. This reduction of financing sources and the limited international aid (from donations) represent a challenge the country needs to address. Since Ecuador is currently considered as an 'upper middle income country', its access to financial aid through international cooperation has decreased during the last decade. This had been a rather minor means of implementation for the MDGs, and will probably remain so for the SDGs. It will be important for the country to diversify its financing portfolio and seek funding from other international financing institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF.

Based on the trend of the State Budget over the last 10 years, it seems that government spending will remain the key source of financing for national programmes and policies, and therefore for the SDGs in Ecuador. However, the increase in government revenues that has occurred in recent years has been influenced by historically high oil prices. Most of the loans have been granted by China whose economy is slowing down. Moreover, international funding has depended on indicators such as the risk country, the performance of the economy and the oil prices. These indicators currently have lower prospects than previous years. With the recent reduction in oil prices, access to credit will become a challenging task for economic authorities from Ecuador. Currently, budget cuts for 2016 have been announced and it is expected that tax collection will be lower. Government incomes will be affected, which in turn, could also affect the capacity of the country to comply with some of the SDGs.

Overall, Ecuador's national budget supports the connection between the national priorities and some of the SDGs. However, there are still gaps between the budget and the priorities of the NPGL and some SDGs related to topics such as water, climate change and gender issues. In the same line, it will be important to monitor how the imminent economic challenges are going to affect these priorities. Currently, Ecuador is facing an economic crisis due to the low oil prices, the dollar depreciation, increasing fiscal and commercial deficit and the increasing external and internal debt. These factors will certainly shape the resource allocation and policy design process during the next years.

As the discussion of the relevance of the SDGs, its compliance, financing and other means of implementation moves forward between national relevant actors, the government might benefit from deeper discussions on how its budget will actually support the fulfillment of the SDGs in the long-run. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is leading this process across the country and should include within the debate the relevance of current financing and means of implementation and also explore additional ones.

7. Conclusions

This study was conducted in a moment of transition before the SDGs were approved by the UN and while Ecuador was winding down its MDG process. Other than general strategic directions, there was limited information available about specific plans or financing and other means of implementing the SDGs in Ecuador. In this sense, this study intends to set the ground for further discussion and research on this topic as the process moves forward.

In Ecuador, the integration of the SDGs is rooted in the national planning process through the NPGL. This document represents a step forward in terms of implementing the country's development plan when it comes to the country's commitment to achieving the SDGs. However, incorporating the SDGs

into national planning requires appropriate indicators and monitoring mechanisms to observe the evolution of the implementation process. The main challenges in this area include:

- Insufficient updated and disaggregated information at the sub-national level.
- The NPGL has a vision of four years; it is necessary to incorporate a long-term vision and corresponding strategies into the planning process.
- Strategies to assess the complexity of the SDGs are required and need to incorporate various actors at the sectorial and local levels.

Ecuador's experience with the MDGs identified challenges in translating national policies into practice at the local level, taking into account the differentiated responsibilities, capabilities and resources at both levels. During this new process, it will be necessary to enhance existing mechanisms to monitor the accomplishment of the SDGs in order to identify the areas where the country will require further attention and more efforts, such as maternal and child mortality, gender equity, interculturality and sustainability.

The NDPPS is Ecuador's key tool for compliance with the NPGL. It was the main intra-governmental mechanism under which MDGs were implemented, monitored and evaluated, and consequently, it should be the same for the SDGs. It is important and necessary for the country to take full advantage of the existing institutional capacities and identify areas for improvement. In this sense, the monitoring process of the SDGs will have to include higher participation from institutions at the national level and stronger coordination with sub-national governments to observe the implementation and adaptation of goals and targets to the local realities.

A recurrent observation from the MDG process was the limited participation of non-governmental actors, not only in the process of defining and negotiating the MDGs, but also in the process of implementing and monitoring them. As a result, there was limited knowledge and awareness of the process and little involvement of civil society, grassroots organisations, and the private sector. It will therefore be important to establish mechanisms to include the participation of non-governmental actors, including social movements in the SDG process, to encourage collaboration and wider participation. The scope and complexity of the new targets will require extensive collaboration and participation from the broader society. Non-governmental initiatives are starting to demonstrate leadership in the SDG implementation process in Ecuador, such as the UN Global Compact and ICLEI, Local Governments for Sustainability. There needs to be more coordination among those initiatives and the national public policies and strategies.

The financing of the SDGs represents another challenge for the country. Ecuador is currently facing low oil prices and limited availability of international funding. A possible economic crisis might affect the country's priorities in terms of funding and might have an impact on the adoption of the SDGs. In terms of financing the SDGs in Ecuador, the main challenges include:

- A general decline in international cooperation and funding available for Latin America can have a negative impact on the availability of funds for the SDGs.
- An economic crisis as a result of the falling oil prices could limit Ecuador's capacity to take sufficient measures to achieve the SDGs.
- Limited participation of the private sector to diversify sources of financing.
- The electoral process that will take place in 2017 in Ecuador can also influence political priorities and drive attention away from the post-2015 agenda.

The SEN in Ecuador is strong and has the capacity to adapt to new objectives. Over the past decade, INEC has strengthened its capacities for gathering and generating reliable statistical information. This existing experience serves as a strong basis for the SDG process. Despite the important progress the country has seen in this field, statistics generation is still centralised at the national level, leaving local levels of government at the margins of the data generation challenge. Local governments have an

important role during the implementation of the SDGs, especially when contributing to the generation of data to monitor the achievement of the SDGs. Barriers to generating reliable data for the SDG process include:

- The measurement mechanisms and indicators to assess the complexity of the SDGs have not yet been defined. INEC will have to lead the process of identifying the ways in which appropriate data can be gathered during the next 15 years.
- The mechanisms and capabilities to gather information at the local level are still limited. Important skills development efforts are required to prepare local actors to become more active during the implementation of the SDGs.
- INEC still needs to strengthen its institutional capacity to reduce data gaps among urban and rural territories.
- Capacity building at the national and local level is crucial to ensure the generation of accurate data with an appropriate level of disaggregation.
- There is still limited participation of NGOs, think tanks and the private sector. The participation of these actors can strengthen the quality of the available data, contribute in the design of new methodologies for data gathering and analysis, etc.

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Launched in 2012, **Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals** (Southern Voice) is a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which was set up to serve as an open platform to contribute to the global discourse pertaining to the formation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the challenges of implementation, monitoring and mid-course review of the SDGs. *Southern Voice* addresses the existing 'knowledge asymmetry' in the global debates and 'participation deficit' of the developing countries by generating evidence-based knowledge, sharing policy experiences originating in the Global South, and disseminating this knowledge and experience among key stakeholders. *Southern Voice Occasional Papers* are based on research undertaken by members of the network as well as inputs received at various platforms of the initiative. The *Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)*, Bangladesh hosts the Secretariat of *Southern Voice*.



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