

Effective Governance for Sustainable Development: Advances in the Ecuadorian Public Administration

The Public Administration in Ecuador has set a clear path with objectives and goals established in the National Development Plan 2017- 2021 known as “Plan A Lifetime,” and in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic, a binding instrument to which public policies, programs and projects are subject, including the programming and execution of the State budget. The path established in the aforementioned instruments are in full alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs, and also, in a long-term perspective, the national government has built a future vision of Ecuador that integrates the voice of the different social and political actors in the country. Based on the recognition that the fulfillment of the objectives and goals set must be achieved through effective governance, and in compliance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including specifically SDG 16 with a focus on effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, the national government has put strong emphasis on institutions and public administration, including via adopting a policy of dialogue covering all sectors of society. The path taken by the national government has called for the participation and involvement of different social actors in this process, as well as in the design and execution of public policies in different sectors.

Within the framework of the strengthening of institutions and public administration and the adoption of the policy of dialogue, first, the national government has oriented its efforts towards redesigning State and its institutions based on political trust and towards being closer to people. Towards this aim, a process of optimizing government structures has started, adapting it to national reality and government priorities. The objective of this process is to strengthen the capacities of government action in policy formulation, regulation and coordination between state and non-state actors, and to consolidate efficient institutions of public service delivery and resource management in the public sector while ensuring the quality of expenditure and guaranteeing constitutionally established rights. This also ensures that governance takes place in accordance with the Principles of effective governance.

Secondly, towards ensuring efficient and independent oversight, the national government has promoted a process of institutional strengthening and reinstitutionalization. It is thus through constitutional mechanisms, and in response to citizen needs that the government has promoted a popular consultation process to establish a transitory CPCCS (participation and social control body of public management and designation of state authorities) to supervise different public entities. The result of this process was the approval of reforms that allowed the depoliticization of control agencies, ensuring conditions for their independent and impartial functioning, the designation of new state

authorities in compliance with constitutional requirements and checks and balances that allow a horizontal control of public management. In this sense, compliance with the principle of independent oversight has allowed political trust to grow in the Ecuadorian State and has led to the consolidation of rule of law, its institutions and procedures.

Thirdly, the government has started a major anticorruption program based on the promotion of transparency and in line with the UN guidelines. Generation of an institutional framework focused on preventing corruption, and the struggle to recover money from corruption, are among concrete actions undertaken by the government.

Fourthly, it is important to recognize that the current government believes that the State constitutes an active agent, but not the only one, in effective governance processes. Utterly important are participatory networks that include civil society and its many organizations, deliberation and consensus building processes to guide development projects; social responsibility public management; and collaboration of public, private and community initiatives. The best way to govern is to make governing an exercise for all.

Complying with the principle of participation, and exalting its dialogue policy, the Ecuadorian government has encouraged the opening of social participation and the involvement of marginalized social sectors through the implementation of various mechanisms and structures of inclusion and participation and developing shared policy agendas, generating consensus, and accompanying and supporting the management of local and national actors around the achievement of actions that promote the common good. In this regard, we can mention as examples: the “National Dialogue” and the “National Agreement”, promoted throughout 2017, with the participation of multiple sectors of civil society--programs from which emanate several strategic policies of national development. In this regard, more than 16,000 dialogue spaces were developed at national level to identify the demands of the various social sectors; to promote consultative public decision-making, and to take into account and strengthen the potential of civil society and the entire citizenry to be active in public life. In this framework, the actions undertaken uphold the principles of effective governance, including particularly those on participation and subsidiarity.

Sixth, in terms of the effective provision of public services, the national government undertakes a series of programs aimed at improving the quality of life for all in Ecuador. Not leaving anyone behind by guaranteeing the delivery of quality public services to citizens, fostering productive innovation and building citizen capacities, these programs are fundamental as they are in recovering trust in the State and its institutions of effective governance. Some of these programs include: “My best years”, through which the central government has invested USD 600 million in pensions for the elderly; the “Neighborhood doctor” program, through which the resources of the health sector have been optimized

and channeled to meet the priorities of vulnerable groups in the country; the “Casa para Todos”, through which the national government has invested USD 301 million benefiting 126 thousand adults and children; the “Tenderness Mission”, through which the national government has invested more than USD 238 million in child care centers and child development centers; the “Young impulse” program, through which the government promotes youth employment, including via agreements with private companies; the “Less poverty” program through which the government has allocated USD 563 million for the Human Development Bond (BDH), and USD 108 million for Human Development Credit program. Likewise, the sectoral actions throughout the country has allowed us to achieve the objectives set in education, health, citizen security, development, transportation and social security, which together have improved the standard of living of the population and increased citizen capacities and potentials.

In this current era of technology, the formulation of policies for the strengthening of skills linked to the field of ICT, in addition to the implementation of public policies that facilitate and extend the use of ICT in public administration, is a necessity. This is with the purpose of generating a climate of innovation that favors the productivity of society. In seventh place, therefore, the policy of digitalization has been promoted, articulating three components: connectivity; innovation and competition, reflected in the National Agenda of Digital; and cybersecurity, including open government as a practice that encourages participation and co-creation, e-government initiatives and the simplification of administrative procedures.

Within the framework of this last strategy of simplification of administration, the Ecuadorian Government has declared the Regulatory Improvement and Administrative Simplification as a State policy that is part of its new vision of public management. This new vision is based on promoting productivity and competitiveness of the economy, execution of agile, simple and efficient procedures, reducing the time, requirements and cost of management, and guaranteeing the right of people to have an efficient, effective, transparent and quality administration, with institutions subscribing to a concept of service delivery responding to the real needs of citizens.

The national government has made progress in its National Plan for Simplification of Procedures, from 2017 to present, simplifying 415 procedures, establishing the Unique Registry of Procedures and Regulations - RUTER, which contains information on 4200 procedures, so that the citizen can know about them and their associated requirements and costs. Equally, more than 2000 public officials have been trained in User Service and 200 public notaries as overseers of processes avoiding unnecessary requirements in public service delivery. Likewise, strategic alliances were forged with the private sector to gather information and prepare proposals for the improvement of procedures that affect the competitiveness and productivity in commerce; and cooperation agreements were generated with international organizations to advance in the implementation of the policy of regulatory improvement and administrative simplification.

The Ecuadorian Government also promotes the implementation of open government as a new way of governing. In May 2018, the President of the Republic announced the intention that Ecuador should be part of the Alliance for Open Government, followed by Ecuador's joining the Alliance in July same year. In August 2018, the Ecuador Open Government Core Group was formed, made up of state entities, members of civil society and academia. Subsequently, in September 2018, an OGP delegation visited the country to assess progress and make recommendations. Since this visit and between October 2018 and August 2019, the core group has worked on the co-creation of the Open Government Action Plan 2019 - 2021 and its institutionalization. The perspective until August 2021 is the implementation of the plan, and its monitoring and follow-up for the adoption of new actions to consolidate open government in Ecuador.

Together, the actions described above show Ecuador's commitment to effective governance that will guide the fulfillment of national development objectives in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, beyond the efforts made so far, it is important to point out that the articulation and exercise of effective governance as a principle is neither easy nor linear. The exercise of governance is subject to many conditions that exceed the state per se, in addition to the challenges posed by public administration itself. Therefore, establishing solid, agile, efficient, open, democratic and inclusive institutions that are capable to respond to social changes, must be put in the center of all public action. The challenge in this regard is to continue generating less rigid, less bureaucratic, more modern and transparent structures that operate closer to society. Mainstreaming these principles in all areas of State action and adopting them as a new logic of public management is important.

The management of effective governance processes allows the consolidation of democratic regimes to the extent that it consolidates transparent states, agile institutions, clear processes, consensus-based development policies based on dialogue and social peace, and on active and participatory society. This is the path that Ecuador has chosen; this is the great challenge of the national government in Ecuador.