

**International Seminar: "Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean"
Towards more effective and equitable investment in children**

**Quito, Ecuador, May 25 and 26, 2015
Concept note**

1. Purpose

The Government of Ecuador, through the Coordinating Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Finance, the National Assembly, the National Council on Inter-generational Equality and UNICEF, are organizing the International Seminar on **"Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean: Towards a more effective and equitable investment in children"**, with the intention of consolidating an **agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean**.

2. Objective

The seminar is intended to provide a forum for dialog and exchange, where the participants can **present the progress and challenges** in the contribution of public spending for the implementation of the rights of children in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a **special focus on the quality and impact of investments**.

The seminar deliberations also will contribute to:

- **A new global partnership for children ("a Monterrey for children") in the context of the Third United Nations Conference on Financing for Development**, to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015 in the framework of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda. This new global partnership for children is intended to promote wellbeing in all the thematic areas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) currently being debated.
- **The development of a General Comment** by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child on "Public Spending to Realize Children's Rights", to promote the adequate allocation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of public spending on children.

3. Background

At present, 195 countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and have committed to invest in children from birth, to help them have a full, healthy and safe life. As established in its Article 4, “**States Parties should designate the maximum amount of available resources toward the realization of the rights of all children without exception**”. The prioritization of public resources for the fulfilment of the rights of children and adolescents is an indicator of the level of importance that governments give to children, which in turn contributes to the economic, social, political and cultural development of a country.

Following the 25th anniversary of the CRC in 2014, there remain many activities to be implemented in most of the States that have ratified the Convention. Adopting the convention, obliges States to take effective and appropriate measures to guarantee children’s rights, The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that **there are no rights without resources**, which makes it necessary to develop a framework requiring the States to assign the maximum amount of resources available to child-focused programmes and public policies as defined in planning.

According to ECLAC¹, Latin America has sustained a decade of economic growth, which has helped to reduce poverty in the region. However, it is estimated that in 2014 poverty affected 167 million people in LAC, or 28% of the population. Another worrisome trend is the widening of income inequality throughout the region.

The process of defining the post-2015 agenda is intensifying in the run up to the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2015. Building on the Monterrey Consensus (2002) and the Doha Declaration (2008), a critical milestone in this process is the **Third International Conference on Development Finance in Addis Ababa in July 2015**. The outcome of the conference will be of crucial importance for the successful implementation of the wider SDG agenda, as it will determine the amount of finance allocated to different priority areas defined in the SDGs.

Leading up to the Addis milestone, the case must be made that **investing in children is not only morally right but also economically sound and politically advisable**. To this end, the Quito 2015 International Seminar: "Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean" will contribute to the building of a coalition of LAC governments and other partners that emphasizes the need for adequate financing of child-related interventions and the importance of directing resources to those most in need. In that way, the Seminar will contribute to the desired outcome of the Addis Conference: a new global partnership for children (“a Monterrey for children”).

On the other hand, the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its 65th meeting in January 2013 decided to develop a **General Comment on “Public Spending to Realize Children’s Rights.”** It is of the utmost importance that the General Comment provides a detailed elaboration of Article 4

¹ Social Panorama 2014, ECLAC.

of the CRC. In doing so, it will help governments to implement legislative, administrative and budgetary mechanisms so that all members of society can assume and understand their role in facilitating better investments in children and adolescents.

In this context it is important to emphasize the recent milestone of the March 24 2015 approval by the Human Rights Council of the Resolution [“Rights of the Child: towards better investment in the rights of the child” \(A/HRC/28/L.28\)](#), which includes a series of recommendations to the States regarding the allocation, utilization, transparency and accountability for the resources to promote, protect and effectively implement the rights of children and adolescents.

The regional seminar in Quito will build on both the **International Seminar on “Investing in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Commitment to Equity at 25 years of the CRC”** held in Lima, Peru in October 2014, and the **International Seminar: Towards a Model for Allocation, Implementation and Monitoring of Public Expenditure for Children** organized by the Government of Colombia in May 2012 in Bogota.

The Bogotá event was the first attempt to identify a pool of resources for public social investment on children and adolescents. The calculation, allocation and tracking of investments have catalysed the generation of a regional agenda on the topic. The Regional Seminar in Lima provided inputs into the process of the General Comment, helped continue the exchange of experiences, and also contributed to creating a regional platform for improving the allocation, implementation, equity and effectiveness of public investment in children and adolescents.

In Quito 2015, the International Seminar on Investment in Children in Latin America and the Caribbean will focus on the **quality and impact of public investment in children**.

4. Expected results

- The region’s good practices, progress and challenges in the area of investment in children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean will have been discussed.
- A technical proposal by the participating delegations to improve investment in children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean will have been proposed.
- The region’s main contributions in matters of investment in children and adolescents for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and for the preparation of the General Observation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child will have been systematized.
- **Seminar final document with conclusions and recommendations:** the document will incorporate the fundamental principles, as well as the recommendations and proposals of the Seminar participants (governments, civil society, academia, think-tanks), for more effective and equitable investment. As a consensus of the participants of the countries of the region of Latin America and the Caribbean, the document will be submitted and presented at the Addis Ababa International Conference, with the aim of placing children in the framework of the financing of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. The Ecuadorian Context

During the last decade, Ecuador has made several major improvements in relation to child rights. Ecuador is one of the few countries in the region that have managed to improve equity: its Gini coefficient stood at 0.485 in December 2013, compared to 0.550 in 2007.

The implementation of national policies related to children has led, among other things, to the following results: infant and under-five mortality rates continue to decline (a reduction from 20.4 and 14.7 per thousand live births in 2005 to 13.7 and 10.1, respectively, in 2011). Net attendance rates for basic education (ages 15 to 14) and secondary (ages 15 to 17) continue to increase.

Ecuador was one of the first countries in the world, to ratify the CRC. It has since been consolidating its promise to children, which is clearly reflected in the National Constitution (2008) and the National Development Plan (Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir (2013-2017)².

Major national priorities include the National Strategy for Equality and the Eradication of Poverty, which includes a focus on multidimensional child poverty and intersectoral strategies on early child development and eradicating child malnutrition.

6. Seminar Topics

Towards a new global partnership for children and adolescents (“a Monterrey for children”) in the context of the Financing for Development Conference

- What are the main issues for children and the post-2015 Agenda?
- How can the new opportunities for integration in the region (ECLAC, UNASUR and others) contribute to the implementation of regional policies and investment in children and adolescents?
- How can the region advocate for the construction of a new global partnership for children and adolescents in the context of the Financing for Development Conference?

Public policy and investment in children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: progress and challenges in the region

- What progress has been made in the region, particularly in the formulation and implementation of public policies and investment in early childhood, for the application of Article 4 of the CRC?
- What are the region’s advances and challenges in the creation of tools for accessing information on investment in children and adolescents, with emphasis on early childhood?

² See, also, the 2003 Code for Children.

- What advancements have been made in each country for improving public policy and investment for children and adolescents, with emphasis on early childhood?
- What barriers are blocking the improvement of public policies and investment in children and adolescents?
- What proposals are needed for improving public policies and investment for children and adolescents?

Policies, tools and strategies for measuring the impact and quality of investment in children and adolescents

- What has been the impact of the application of fiscal policy instruments (tributary, spending and/or financing) on the guarantee of rights for children and adolescents?
- What are the main instruments defined in planning and budgeting that contribute to improving the effectiveness and equity of investment in children and adolescents?
- How can we ensure the sustainability of the investment in children and adolescents? How can we monitor it?

Role of the territories in public investment for children and adolescents

- How can we ensure an equitable distribution of public investment in children and adolescents, with emphasis on early childhood and taking into account the territorial and ethnic situations and other particular conditions of the population?
- What mechanisms contribute to achieving quality in public investment in children and adolescents at the different levels of government?
- How have decentralization and/or deconcentration contributed to public investment in children and adolescents?

Accountability, transparency and participation

- What national or sub-national strategies have improved access to information and transparency in investment in children and adolescents?
- How does the legislature contribute to accountability processes regarding investment in children and adolescents?
- How do high-level regulatory bodies influence the improvement of the quality of investment in children and adolescents?
- What sustainable mechanisms for the participation of civil society and children and adolescents are present in the preparation and monitoring of the budget, and what strategies have made this participation sustainable?
- What roles have civil society organizations and other key actors played in the social control of investment in children and adolescents?

Conclusions and closing ceremony

- Includes the reading of the **Seminar final document with conclusions and recommendations**

7. Methodology

The Seminar will utilize a **participatory methodology** to capture the multiple perspectives and suggestions of participants and speakers. In the five planned thematic panels, demonstrative experiences that have contributed to the implementation of the rights of children and adolescents in the LAC region will be presented. Following the panel sessions (each panel limited to a maximum of three to four presentations) opportunities for the exchange of opinions among work groups will be provided, based on motivating questions. The main conclusions and suggestions of the work groups will be agreed upon and shared in plenary. Through the event we hope to create a series of inputs that can be used both for advocacy in the context of Addis Ababa and the Post-2015 Agenda, and for the preparation of the CRC's General Comment. These inputs will be fundamental for promoting a more efficient and equitable investment in children and adolescents in the region.

8. Participants

200 national and international/foreign participants

1. **Minister for the Coordination of Social Development, Cecilia Vaca Jones, and Minister of Finance, Fausto Herrera**
2. **UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, Yoka Brandt**
3. **Latin America and the Caribbean:** regional experts, government officials, UNICEF social inclusion focal points, representatives from civil society organizations in the region.
4. **Ecuador:** Coordinating Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Finance, National Assembly, National Council on Intergenerational Equality, other government institutions, civil society organizations, academia.
5. **International experts**

9. Event date and venue

- Date: Monday May 25 and Tuesday May 26, 2015
- Place: Quito, Swissotel Quito