



ECUADOR

Capital Quito, 00°9's 78°21'w
Largest city Guayaquil, 2°11's 79°53'w

Official languages Spanish

Government **Presidential republic**
- President Rafael Correa
- Vice President Lenín Moreno

Independence
- from Spain (*Failed*) August 10, 1809
- from Spain May 24, 1822
- from Gran Colombia May 13, 1830

Political Parties (election results 2009)

Governing party
Movimiento Alianza País (MPAIS) 61

Opposition parties
Partido Social Patriótica (PSP) 23
Movimiento Popular Democrático (MPD) 7
Partido Social Cristiano (PSC) 6
Partido Renovador Institucional Acción Nacional (PRIAN) 4
Movimiento Municipalista 4

Other parties – rest

Total: 124

State of Democracy Ecuador

Until 2006, when President Rafael Correa took office, Ecuador has known significant political and economic instability. The last three years the country has been relatively stable. A political reform process was initiated and a new constitution adopted in 2008. In April 2009, general elections were held, granting Mr Correa his first term under the new constitution.

Movimiento País

After Correa's victory in 2006, traditional political parties have almost disappeared from the political scene. The opposition is weak, fragmented and re-active. Consequently, it bears no surprise that Mr Correa's political movement, Movimiento País, won the largest number of seats in the National Assembly (44%) in the 2009 elections. The movement achieved a majority by creating coalitions with various members of the opposition.

Institutionalisation of political parties

With the traditional political parties in disarray, both the new movement and the remaining political organisations are weakly institutionalised. Aspects such as internal party democracy, transparency, and political representation are not yet well developed. To address this, a Code of Democracy (or the new Political Organizations and Electoral Law) has been adopted by Parliament. All political organisations are to comply to the Code before the next elections in 2013.

Citizens Participation

The new constitution, approved of by referendum in 2008, added a fifth pillar to the original four foundations of the State. Thus in addition to the Legislative, Executive, Electoral and Judiciary, a fifth body has been incorporated. The most important institute of this new function is the National Council of Citizens Participation and Social Control. This body, consisting of seven citizens, will oversee and control the management of the State. As citizens rather than politicians populate the Council some analysts consider the arrangement as a replacement of representative democracy by participatory democracy.

Economics

Economically, Ecuador is doing relatively well. Mr Correa has chosen a less radical economic approach than foreseen in view of his campaign. One major reform that has been implemented concerns the national tax system. The tax reform resulted in a significant increase of revenues. In addition, the price of the country's principle natural resource, oil, has recovered in recent months. Strong internal reserves and a solid banking system has further helped the country through the financial crisis, faring better than most other Latin American countries.

NIMD Ecuador Programme

Dialogue

Within the current political context, it is of vital importance that reforms are implemented with support of all political forces and civil society. Although the formal space for political dialogue is widening, promotion of informal and alternative spaces for dialogue is still necessary in the light of continuing political polarization. NIMD's partner, Agora Democrática, fosters such alternative spaces for dialogue among members of the National Assembly, local authorities and other political actors.

Political reform proposals elaborated and discussed

Ágora Democrática has provided technical assistance to the development of the Code of Democracy. This code forces all political groupings – local, regional or national- to (re)build themselves and implement mechanisms for internal party democracy, accountability, gender equality, militants registration and transparency of finances. Currently, Agora Democrática assists political organisations (national, regional and local) in the effort to comply with these requirements.

Inclusivity of Women

In the course of 2009, Ágora Democrática, in cooperation with the Association of Women Authorities in local Governments (AMUNE), has organised a series of seminars and workshops in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca to train female political candidates for positions in regional and local governments. The trainings dealt with topics such as political negotiation, the new constitution, political strategy and communication. Ágora Democrática also founded a multiparty women's platform for members of the National Assembly. The platform promotes gender equality in all legislation drafted by the National Assembly.

Political Society and Civil Society

NIMD's programme in Ecuador has also focused on the media. In 2008 Ágora Democrática worked with a network of community radio stations (CORAPE) to disseminate information on the constitutional reform proposals set forth in the public referendum. In 2009 this cooperation evolved into a project entitled "The Constitution in Practice". In a series of radio programmes, citizens were informed on basic questions such as: What does the constitution entail for the citizens? What are their rights and obligations? In addition, awareness on the new constitution was also raised through newspapers and in workshops. Politicians were directly involved in these programmes, bridging the gap between political and civil society.



Ágora Democrática's effort to promote gender mainstreaming in politics left its mark on the new Constitution, which provides for mechanisms to ensure equal treatment of male and female candidates for political office, and requires parties to implement gender equality practices. During a breakfast meeting with parliamentarians in August 2009, 50 of the 69 participants signed a commitment to women's rights that included among others, including legislation to combat discrimination against women and to ensure equal access for women to health care, education, culture and recreation, and the principle of parity in governmental decision making.

Stakeholders

1. Programme partner

Ágora Democrática (together with International IDEA)

2. National partners

Political parties (see annex) – Coordinadora de Radios Populares y Educativas del Ecuador (CORAPE, network of community radios) – Asociación de Mujeres Municipalistas del Ecuador (AMUME) – Participación Ciudadana, NGO on civil participation – Centro de Documentación e Información de los Movimientos Sociales del Ecuador (CEDIME, Documentation Centre of the Social Movements in Ecuador) – Simón Bolívar Andean University – Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLASCO)

3. International partners

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI) – Organization of American States (OAS) – Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT)