**Context**

Established under the Constitution in February 2007, the Heritage Ministry is responsible for coordinating intangible heritage policies and activities conducted by institutions such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of the Environment, the Department of Peoples and Civic Participation and the National Cultural Heritage Institute. Thus, owing to the Heritage Ministry, the public sector is adapting structurally to a new form of institutional management that incorporates ethnic and cultural diversity and gender equality. This is the context in which the gender and interculturality policy was formulated for the Sectoral Heritage Council in order to halt the racism, ethnic and gender exclusion and social inequality that deprive indigenous peoples, Afro-Ecuadorians, peasants and poor mestizos of opportunities.

**Process**

The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Sport, the Ministry of the Environment, the Department of Peoples and Civic Participation and the National Cultural Heritage Institute all participated in the formulation of the public gender and interculturality policy. This policy, a trailblazer in Latin America, also takes the demands set out in the agenda of Ecuador’s indigenous women’s associations into account. Drawing on a wide variety of bibliographical documents on the stark inequalities that mainly affect indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian women, the country’s female peasants, tenant farmers, coastal peasants and poor mestizos, and pursuant to the “2009-2013 National Plan for a Good Life” which calls for the construction of a pluralist, inclusive, fair, cooperative society, the country’s various heritage-sector bodies held a series of meetings, under the Heritage Ministry’s “Development and Cultural Diversity Programme”, in which they analysed, debated and agreed to implement the sectoral gender and interculturality policy.

Without a doubt, the most important factors in the formulation of the sectoral gender and interculturality policy were the integration of the “gender” and “interculturality” approaches and acknowledgement of the need for commitment to improving the living conditions of people belonging to the country’s most disadvantaged ethnic groups. Programmes and activities devised under this policy will therefore be required to factor in interlinked gender and interculturality considerations and to prioritize Ecuador’s minority and marginalized population groups. The direct beneficiaries will include not only the specific target group but also the general population, which will be made aware of these pressing issues owing to various media (press, radio and television) campaigns and improvements in the implementation of future projects.