Call for Concept Notes: Assessing Current Dynamics in Ecuador

Considering the complex challenges Ecuador faces regarding governance, transparency, accountability, political participation, and security, LACLEARN is conducting a broad assessment to deepen understanding of Ecuador's governance and security landscape. This analysis aims to understand the critical factors and stakeholders, the challenges and opportunities, while also accounting for geographic variations that influence democratic processes, human rights observance, and avenues for resilient and reformative policy development. In support of this process, LACLEARN invites local organizations and academic institutions to submit concept notes for a research grant.

Given the project's objectives listed below, we strongly urge the involvement of local organizations with expertise at subnational level. Additionally, we encourage national organizations to establish connections with local organizations that have experience working in the field to achieve the best expected results.

Research Objectives

To achieve this goal, the research is driven by the following guiding questions:
- What specific factors at the national and subnational levels in Ecuador influence transparency, accountability, political participation, socioeconomic development and undermine security??
- Who are the key stakeholders in Ecuador's efforts against corruption, informal economies and insecurity, and what main barriers do they face in promoting effective change?
- What are the distinct challenges and opportunities faced at both national and subnational levels in Ecuador regarding transparency, accountability, political participation, socioeconomic development and insecurity, particularly in relation to government responses and political narratives?
- How do these challenges and opportunities vary across different regions or municipalities in Ecuador, and how can interventions be tailored to address these variances effectively?

Analytical Priorities

The applicant is expected to propose innovative research approaches primarily focused on civil society's role, engagement and/or influence:

- Democratic Engagement: Examine the capacity and strategies of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Ecuador to foster greater political participation and civic engagement, particularly in underrepresented and rural communities. Identify best practices and challenges faced by CSOs in promoting democratic values and practices.
- Responsive Governance: Analyze the main obstacles impeding the effectiveness of civil society in advocating for transparency and accountability, including legal restrictions, financial constraints, and political repression. Simultaneously, assess the openings and strategies that can be leveraged by CSOs to overcome these barriers.

- Countering Corruption and Insecurity: Investigate how civil society can effectively contribute to anti-corruption efforts and security policies. Focus on the mechanisms for civil society participation in policy development, oversight, and the fostering of government accountability.
- Leadership and Political Narratives: Assess the impact of civil society's actions and campaigns on the leadership styles of key political figures, the impeachment process, and corruption allegations. Evaluate how civil society can shape political narratives and public discourse on democratic governance.
- Scenario Planning and Policy Advocacy: Explore potential future scenarios for Ecuador's political landscape and the role of civil society in these scenarios. Identify strategic interventions that civil society organizations can advocate for to enhance democratic governance and stability.

Resulting Illustrative Deliverables could include:

- **Comprehensive Reports (25-page max):** Detailed analyses focusing on the role and impact of civil society in promoting democratic governance in Ecuador. These reports should provide insights into the strategies employed by CSOs to navigate the political environment, advocate for policy reforms, and enhance civic participation.
- **Policy Briefs on Civil Society's Strategic Opportunities (5-page max):** Concise documents highlighting actionable recommendations for strengthening the capacity and influence of civil society in governance processes. These briefs should serve as a resource for CSOs, policymakers, and international donors.
- **Case Studies of Successful Civil Society Initiatives (10-page max):** In-depth case studies documenting instances of civil society's successful engagement in promoting transparency, accountability, and political participation. These cases can serve as models for replication and scaling.
- **Scenario Analyses (20-page max):** Scenario planning documents that outline possible scenarios for Ecuador's democracy and the strategic positioning of civil society within these contexts. These analyses should provide a basis for CSOs to plan their advocacy and engagement strategies effectively.
- **Civil Society Engagement Frameworks (15-page max):** Development of frameworks that CSOs can utilize to enhance their engagement with governmental bodies, stakeholders, and communities. These frameworks should offer practical steps for civil society to contribute to democratic resilience in Ecuador.

This list presents some common research deliverables from similar studies; however, each applicant is encouraged to propose the most appropriate deliverable based on their expertise and in accordance with the technical approach.

About LACLEARN:

The LACLEARN Grants Under Contract (GUC) Program aims to support LACLEARN's objectives with complementary work in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The funded grants will contribute to:

- Rapid response to crisis situations, promoting inclusion, participation, citizen-responsive approaches, and transparency/accountability.
- Piloting innovative technical approaches, implementing research, disseminating learnings, and supporting democracy, human rights, and good governance initiatives.

Available Funds:

Subject to availability, the total funding for awards under this call for concept notes is up to $100,000 for one or more grants, each spanning no more than three months.

Submission Details:

Interested organizations should send their concept notes to lacgrants@developmentpi.com using Annex A: Grants Program Concept Note Template.

DEADLINE: May 3, 2024