

Ecuador Moves From Money to Community to Measure Happiness



Quito, July 2 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Ecuador has planned to create new standards to measure well-being, including environment and community, moving away from income and economic growth as conventional models.

To measure and define 'Good Living' -- or *Buen Vivir* in Spanish -- experts from Latin America and Europe are examining the details. The measures of happiness to be discussed will be based on three pillars: human beings, the environment, and community.

The new happiness index is based on the indigenous concept of "good living," or *Sumak Kawsay* in the indigenous Kichwa language. Good Living is protected and promoted under Ecuador's 2008 Constitution.

According to the Minister of Good Living, Freddy Ehler, the way to measure progress shouldn't be strictly based on economic income, but rather on what makes people happy and offers them "inner peace."

International organizations as the United Nations and the OECD currently measure well-being based on a country's GDP, purchasing powers and access to basic services.

For José Rosero, executive director of the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC), this is an “orthodox paradigm” linked to accumulation of wealth and economic growth. “You don’t need to accumulate wealth, but rather produce and consume the necessary amount,” Rosero said. According to Rosero, Ecuador is also developing another way to measure poverty, which will include multiple aspects as health, education, and quality of life.

The ‘Good Living’ minister stressed that this requires individual change since ‘Sumak Kawsay’ is a personal choice to live in harmony with each other and with nature--not something that can be imposed by government, military, economic or political powers.

The project is inspired by the policy of Bhutan, a small country located close to the Himalayas, whose policy and development model is based on philosophy of gross national happiness (GNH). This concept based on four pillars: sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development; the preservation and promotion of culture, environmental preservation and good governance.

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