



INTERCULTURAL AND GENDER SENSITIVE DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION IN ECUADOR

Annual Report
2023

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Acronyms

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo)
CETCIS	Center for Knowledge Transfer and Social Innovation (Centro para la Transferencia de Conocimiento e Innovación Social)
CORAPE	Coordinator of Popular and Educational Community Media in Ecuador (Coordinadora de Medios Comunitarios Populares y Educativos del Ecuador)
DFATD	Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development
GAD	Decentralized Autonomous Government (Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado)
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
PDYOT	Development and Territorial Planning (Plan de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PUCE	Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador)
TCE	Contentious Electoral Tribunal (Tribunal Contencioso Electoral)
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

I. Background

The year 2023 proved to be a turbulent period for Ecuador, marked by unexpected political disturbance and a deepening erosion of social cohesion, accompanied by a surge in violence and insecurity.

In the political sphere, a series of events unfolded, culminating in a complex situation of political and institutional instability. The year commenced with a plebiscite convened by the national government. This was followed by the impeachment trial of the President of the Republic, which failed to reach a resolution as the Executive invoked a constitutional provision to dissolve the National Assembly, advancing national elections instead. Faced with the looming possibility of dismissal by the Assembly, the government of Guillermo Lasso chose to abbreviate its term, ultimately culminating in presidential elections and the renewal of the National Assembly by the year's end.

The escalation in criminal activities, particularly organized crime, emerged as the primary driver behind the security crisis gripping the nation throughout 2023. This, coupled with the decline in the population's quality of life and the State's diminishing capacity to uphold rights and deliver services, precipitated a surge in violence, particularly in Ecuador's coastal region. According to Ministry of the Interior data, 2023 concluded with an unprecedented rate of 45 violent homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, alongside 321 recorded femicides.

These institutional and security crises have swiftly risen to the top of the agendas for both national and local authorities. Also, it's crucial to acknowledge Ecuador's recent history of social unrest, with significant outbreaks in October 2019 and June 2022, characterized by unprecedented levels of

violence. Human Rights organizations report 17 fatalities and over 1,800 injuries resulting from these national strikes, with the Ecuador Central Bank estimating economic losses totaling USD 1.8 million.

The most recent protests culminated in an agreement between the Government and Indigenous Peoples organizations, emphasizing the importance of dialogue in achieving peace, national reconciliation, and economic development. Among various institutional actors, the Catholic University was tasked with facilitating the dialogues and assuming the role of sole rapporteur for the ensuing monitoring mechanism established after the dialogue process.

In this context, the project aimed to bolster the Catholic University's capacity as a facilitator in the dialogue process. Additionally, a secondary strategy was conceived to enhance dialogue and participation capacities at the local level, focusing on regions experiencing heightened conflict associated with the indigenous organizations' agenda. However, in February 2023, the dialogue process was indefinitely halted due to the political and institutional crisis. Considering these altered circumstances, an amendment of the original project was approved in September 2023.

II. Executive Summary

Due to a context characterized by political upheaval and high uncertainty it was necessary to adapt the project's logic framework during 2023. As a result, UNDP reformulated the project focusing the intervention at the local level, and proposing an extension of the agreement, initially effective until June 2024. Thus, the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD) and UNDP signed an extension of the agreement to 18 months, effective until December 2025.

Some substantive changes were made through the amendment agreement, particularly to the sections: I. Development Challenge; II. Strategy; III. Results and Partnerships (including Risks and Assumptions y Stakeholder Engagement); IV. Project Management; V. Results Framework; y, VII. Multiyear Workplan. In addition, a budget redistribution was made between Intermediate Result 1 (\$295,979.66) and Intermediate Result 2 (\$325,161.39), maintaining the amount for monitoring activities.

Taking advantage of its capacities and facilitation experience in recent conflicts, UNDP signed an agreement with the Catholic University for the design of a training and knowledge management program, prioritizing intervention at the local level, which is distributed in immediate results 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1. In this line, the training of local teachers, both from rural and marginal urban areas, represents an innovative initiative that seeks to strengthen a local actor with strong links to the communities where they work, to support peace-building processes.

Moreover, institutional exchanges with local government authorities enabled coordination between technical teams and the establishment of lines of cooperation aimed to promote the participative local planification, prioritizing the gender and intercultural issues, to be developed in 2024.

Finally, in line with the promotion of gender equality, support was given to a radio campaign on gender violence in the political sphere. The project also supported the participation of a young Kichwa Otavalo woman leader in a regional event on Youth, Peace, and Security. These activities contributed to strengthening the electoral system in its strategy to prevent political violence against women and to strengthen youth leadership in line with the project's objectives.

III. Results by outcome and output

UNDP signed a Low Value Grant Agreement with the Catholic University (PUCE) for the partial execution of the project, for 124,380.00 USD, to be implemented in 2024 and 2025, which was approved by the Executive Board of the project (composed by the Canadian Embassy and UNDP). The program has three components: a training program for dialogue agents, a professionalization program for peace educators, and a component centered on knowledge management in political and social conflict. The lines of work of this program are distributed in the intermediate outcome 1 and 2 of the project. During 2023, The Catholic University worked in the design of the training and knowledge management program on peace, dialogue, and conflict prevention.

The results achieved in 2023 are presented in detail below.

Intermediate Outcome 1: Enhanced capacities of Catholic University, local leaderships and local public officials for conflict resolution and social dialogues monitoring, with an intercultural and gender-based approach.

A training program was design for key actors in dialogue and peace, aimed at territorial authorities and local government authorities in the central highlands, provinces of Tungurahua, Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, and Pichincha, particularly the Andean Chocó area.

The programming specialist hired provided technical support during the program design process, including coordination within the Catholic University, the design of the proposal's lines of work and the preparation of the budget.

Immediate Outcome 1.1. Improved operative capacities of the Catholic University's team to design and implement a program of training and knowledge sharing on intercultural and gender sensitive dialogue and conflict prevention.

Output 1: *Operative support to the Catholic University to design and implement a program of training and knowledge sharing on intercultural and gender sensitive dialogue and conflict prevention.*

Progress status	Achievements
Completed	2 specialists hired and assigned to Catholic University: 1 Programmatic Assistant and 1 Administrative Assistant for CETCIS – PUCE.
	Acquisition of 5 HP equipment for the team responsible for project implementation.

UNDP, in coordination with the UN Volunteer Program, hired two specialists to provide programming support to CETCIS-PUCE, including the preparation of terms of reference, launching of calls for proposals, selection process, which were incorporated in July and August 2023. The programmatic assistant contributed to the internal coordination at the Catholic University and between UNDP and the university, in addition to the coordination and design of the training program and the development of the budget for the workplan. The acquisition of equipment facilitated the operational development of the project team. However, both specialists decided to not complete their contract

and left the project by the end of 2023. In this context, a senior UNV expert was hired to respond the programmatic needs of the project.

Output 2: <i>The Catholic University analysis and research capacities are reinforced from intercultural and gender approaches.</i>	
Progress status	Achievements
Completed	Technical definition for the establishment of an observatory for the development of technical-academic inputs on issues related to political and social conflict.

This line is part of the program agreed with PUCE, which will be conducted during 2024. The technical coordination will be carried out with the university, through the academic unit of specialized studies, to produce 2-3 technical-academic documents that analyze and problematize political, economic, and social issues.

Immediate outcome 1.2 A program of training and knowledge sharing on intercultural, and gender sensitive dialogue and conflict prevention is designed and implemented.

Output 3 <i>Design of a training program and knowledge sharing on intercultural and gender sensitive dialogue and conflict prevention.</i>	
Progress status	Achievements
Completed	Definition of an educational offer (diploma, course, citizen laboratory) for public servants and local leaders on conflict prevention and management.

This line is part of the program agreed with PUCE, which will be implemented during 2024. The educational offer includes one diploma course on skills for territorial conflict management for local government staff with an estimated duration of 3 months, one training course for authorities on competencies in social and territorial issues with an estimated duration of 4 weeks, and one citizen laboratory as a mechanism for knowledge management to be conducted throughout 2024.

Intermediate Outcome 2 A network of facilitators and women leaders created to promote and sustain intercultural and gender aware consensus processes as well as local participative development planning.

We highlight the design of a professionalization program for teachers, focusing on theoretical skills and practical tools for peace building, dialogue, and conflict prevention. This program is included in the agreement with the Catholic University to begin in 2024.

Similarly, the coordination at the technical level with local governments for capacity building in planning, participation, and public integrity. The interaction was direct and close with the planning, social development, and security teams of the local governments.

Immediate Outcome 2.1 Promoted local actors' capacities on building and supporting local peaceful communities with intercultural, human rights and gender approaches.

Output 4 *A network of intercultural "educators for peace" (men and women) is trained and able to strengthen their pedagogic activities with gender and human rights approaches in order to support peace communities.*

Progress status	Achievements
Completed	Design of a professionalization program for teachers, focusing on theoretical skills and practical tools for peace building, dialogue, and conflict prevention.
	Establishment of "Peace Scholarships" to support and encourage the participation of diverse teaching profiles in the professionalization program.

UNDP coordinated with PUCE for the design of the program included in the agreement signed at the end of 2023. PUCE, through the Faculty of Education Sciences and the Center for Knowledge Transfer and Social Innovation (CETCIS), will develop a teacher professionalization program starting in March 2024, which will also be complemented with advanced diploma courses focused on dialogue and peace for the educational environment.

The launching of the "Peace Scholarships" initiative, under the teacher professionalization program, will take place in 2024 in coordination with the Catholic University and the Canadian Embassy.

Immediate Outcome 2.2 Promoted women's political leadership and intercultural and gender themes in local government planification processes.

Output 5 *Capacities for political transition and participative local planification, with gender and intercultural approaches were built.*

Progress status	Achievements
Completed	Definition of technical assistance with the provincial government of Cotopaxi for the identification of corruption risks in priority areas of the GAD and the development of recommendations for their prevention and management from a public integrity approach.

UNDP agreed with the Provincial Government of Cotopaxi to provide technical assistance in the area of participation and public transparency. The Quality Management and Institutional Development Committee will be the technical counterpart within the GAD and will accompany this process. The contractual process was launched in December 2023 and will begin during the first quarter of 2024.

Technical meetings were held with the planning area of the Chimborazo Provincial Government. Two opportunities were identified for technical assistance in the development of territorial indexes within the framework of the updating of the local government's Development and Territorial Planning Plan (PDYOT), and support for the operation of the institution's citizen training school for provincial leaders in governance and organizational management.

Finally, the project is coordinating with the GAD of Riobamba and Ambato to initiate lines of work within the framework of this project in 2024.

Output 6 <i>Political empowerment and leadership of women and other local actors was promoted.</i>	
Progress status	Achievements
Completed	Support for the radio campaign for the prevention of gender-based political violence during the last electoral period in Spanish and Kichwa.
	Support for the participation of a young Kichwa Otavalo in the regional event of Youth, Peace, and Security, in Bogota - Colombia, in November 2023.

In August 2023, with the approval of the Canadian Embassy, and in collaboration with UN Women, the Contentious Electoral Tribunal (TCE) and the Coordinator of Popular and Educational Community Media in Ecuador (CORAPE), UNDP supported the development of a radio intercultural campaign on gender violence. A radio spot was produced in Spanish, Andean Kichwa and Amazonian Kichwa. The radio spots were played between 30 and 45 times for 3 days (August 15, 16 and 17) in 55 community media affiliated to CORAPE, reaching 1740 radio transmissions nationwide.

The radio campaign permitted to inform the audience about the regulations that establish gender-based political violence as a serious electoral infraction, the consequences for those who violate the Code of Democracy, and about the state institution that processes complaints of electoral infractions. The campaign targeted the adult rural population of Ecuador and had a national scope.

UNDP also supported the participation of a young Kichwa Otavalo leader in the regional intergenerational meeting to advance the implementation of the Agenda for Youth, Peace and Security in Latin America and the Caribbean. This event was held on November 27 and 28, 2023, in the city of Bogota, Colombia. The youth participated in different activities carried out for the creation of the implementation roadmap, such as plenary sessions and working sessions. As a result of this space, recommendations were made for the implementation of the agenda at the national and local levels, and a network of young peace and security promoters was established among the participants.

This space represents a milestone in advancing regional efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation of youth in peace and security building through knowledge sharing activities.

III. Partnerships

During 2023, the main partners were the Catholic University (PUCE), the local governments of the central highlands, and international cooperation agencies.

The work with the Catholic University involved strategic collaboration with the Center for Knowledge Transfer and Social Innovation (CETCIS) for the design of a training and knowledge management program on peace, dialogue, and conflict prevention, aimed at government and civil society actors. PUCE was considered as a strategic partner in the implementation of actions in the territory, based on its experience in dialogue processes and its academic infrastructure, particularly for the implementation of components 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1.

Cooperation with local governments was coordinated directly through regular interaction with the technical teams of the planning areas of the provinces of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo to identify opportunities for collaboration. The alliance with local governments led by women from indigenous peoples and nationalities is particularly highlighted. First, the Prefect of the Provincial Government of Cotopaxi, Lourdes Tibán of the Kichwa Panzaleo people; and second, the Mayor of the Municipal Government of Ambato, Diana Caiza of the Kichwa Chibuleo people.

Furthermore, UNDP collaborated with the Contentious Electoral Tribunal, the Coordinator of Popular and Educational Community Media of Ecuador CORAPE, UN Women, the United Nations Volunteers Program, the European Union, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Embassy of Switzerland in Ecuador and, as well as the Government of Canada during 2023.

IV. Main challenges, lessons learned, and mitigation measures

The socio-political landscape of the past year has been complex and has significantly impacted the implementation of the project. On one hand, the interruption of follow-up activities stemming from agreements reached at the dialogue tables posed a challenge, as the project's short-term strategy was originally geared towards supporting this national process through PUCE, leveraging its expertise as a facilitator. On the other hand, the advancement of national elections prompted a reassessment of the strategy considering the emerging political and institutional challenges.

Given this context, reorienting interventions towards the local level became imperative. A localized approach was crucial for swiftly identifying and addressing local issues that have the potential to escalate into social conflicts with broader national repercussions.

Moreover, it was essential to collaborate the Catholic University as a strategic partner, capitalizing on its institutional and academic infrastructure with a local presence. This partnership aims to bolster the intercultural dialogue capacities of public sector actors and social organizations within the territory. It underscores the importance of local community participation in crafting tools and mechanisms for early conflict management, leveraging local expertise and knowledge for this purpose. By empowering local social actors, both public and private, to identify and monitor social conflicts, we can foster a process of collective action and raise awareness about the repercussions of unresolved conflicts.

However, challenges arose in engaging and coordinating with certain local governments. Delays in responses or changes in technical counterparts hindered the coordination process for defining cooperation strategies. Hence, it is important to accurately assess the capabilities of local government authorities and technical personnel within public entities. These officials often face constraints such as limited budgets, heavy workloads, complex management contexts (including geographical distances and daily emergencies) and outdated technical expertise. Consequently, adopting a targeted approach when collaborating with local government counterparts is recommended.

Despite encountering obstacles in achieving cooperation due to delayed responses, UNDP remained open and flexible to continue exploring collaboration opportunities. The aim is to forge cooperative partnerships and advance development initiatives in 2024 with at least three local governments in the Central Highlands of Ecuador.

V. Monitoring and compliance

UNDP carried out monitoring and follow-up activities on both planned activities and the country's socio-political context that could affect project implementation. The main actions in this regard are described below.

Key monitoring and supervision activities	Findings and summary
Monthly internal and external coordination and follow up meetings	The team in charge of the project held regular meetings to monitor the activities, and externally, meetings were held mainly with the Catholic University to manage the jointly designed program, in accordance with the project's objectives.
Meetings with local government authorities	Meeting with the prefect of the Cotopaxi provincial government, Lourdes Tibán, in May, with the mayor of the Ambato provincial government, Diana Caiza, in October, and the prefect of the Chimborazo provincial government, Hermel Tayupanda, in November. These meetings identified opportunities for collaboration, which the technical teams subsequently followed up to achieve technical cooperation between UNDP and the local governments.
Territorial visits	In 2023, visits were made to the provincial governments of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, as well as the municipal government of Ambato to explore opportunities for institutional cooperation within the framework of the project.

The activities implemented in 2023 contributed to the completion of some indicators, in particular the following:

Indicator	Goal 2023	Report
1.1 Number of experts (men/women) hired, to support the Catholic University Center of Knowledge Exchange and Social Innovation (CETCIS).	1	- 2 UNV specialists hired to work with PUCE / CETCIS.
1.2 Number of pieces of equipment acquired for the Catholic University / Project activities.	5	- 5 equipment acquired for the team responsible for the project.
6.2 Number of strategies to mitigate local barriers against women political empowerment.	1	- 1 radio campaign on political violence carried out. - 1 leader sponsored to participate in regional Youth, Peace, and Security event.

Note: One of the specialists resigned after the first month and the second one in December 2023, therefore an expert profile was defined to be hired in 2024.

VI. Financial report

The financial resources executed during 2023 are reported below.:

Summary of expenses 2023	Amount in USD
Low Value Grant Agreement - PUCE	124.380,00
Radio campaign on political violence	12.554,18
Specialist staff assigned to PUCE	16.155,50
Acquisition of five equipment	5.549,00
Participation in regional Youth, Peace, and Security event	1.179,34
Interculturality specialist	11.686,97
Monitoring specialist	1.610,55
Delivery Enabling Services (DES)	401,28
General operative cost UNDP	13.881,36
Total used in 2023	187.398,18

VII. Elements for the 2024 workplan

The execution of the Project in 2024 entails two main lines of action. The agreement with PUCE will start its implementation, according to the agreement. At the local level, lines of work will be established with at least three local governments in the central highlands of Ecuador. Within this framework, several lines of action can be mentioned:

- Consolidate and expand cooperation with the local governments of the provinces of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, and cantonal governments of Ambato and Riobamba.
- Implement the workplan under the program designed with the Catholic University, with an emphasis on the participation of local teachers in the peace scholarship program.
- Strengthen and identify new alliances to implement the project.
- Identify strategies for knowledge management and dissemination.