



UCLG PEACE PRIZE

SECOND ROUND: FINAL INPUT FROM ELIGIBLE CONTESTANTS

Congratulations, you are eligible to participate in the second and final round of the UCLG Peace Prize for local governments, please complete the following application form and submit it at latest **1 February 2026** by email to Peace.Prize@VNG.nl . The jury will use these forms to select the finalists.

You may, next to this application form, send other materials supporting the initiative (pictures, graphics, videos or other). If you have not done so in your initial application, you can still send these as attachments or through WeTransfer.

The criteria for eligibility and scoring can be found on www.peaceprize.uclg.org.

Name of Local Government

Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado Provincial de Manabí (GADP Manabí)

Country:

Ecuador

Name of the initiative:

Rompiendo Barreras (Breaking Barriers)

Implementation period of initiative (start date – end date, or still ongoing):

31/07/2023 – Ongoing

Please provide your answers to the following questions concisely, using a maximum of **300 words** per question.



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Background information

What is the type of problem you are working to address? How large is your territory or community, and what does the jury need to know about the context?

We address the profound social exclusion and lack of access to specialized rehabilitation services faced by people with disabilities and the elderly in rural Manabí. In a territory of 1.6 million inhabitants with difficult geography, the centralized health system forced vulnerable patients to travel hours for therapy, which most could not afford.

The context is critical: **Ecuador faces a wave of violence, and Manabí is the second most affected province.** This insecurity creates "zones of silence" where the state disappears. Vulnerable groups are doubly victimized by fear and lack of mobility. The problem was not just medical, but territorial inequality. We understood that to build peace, we needed to establish a permanent state presence in every corner of the province, ensuring that no citizen is abandoned to poverty or violence.

Describe the initiative and its aims

What is the initiative you developed to address this problem and how does it do this? What are the activities that have been implemented? To what extent is the initiative participatory in nature and inclusive of marginalised groups?

"Rompiendo Barreras" aims to decentralize social justice. We moved from a model of occasional visits to a **permanent territorial network**. The core achievement is the creation of 60 Physical Rehabilitation Centers, ensuring the presence of at least one center in every rural parish of the province.

How it works:

- **Decentralized Infrastructure:** Unlike traditional models focused on large urban hospitals, we built a capillary network of 60 centers closer to the people.
- **Comprehensive Care:** These centers provide free physical therapy, language therapy, and psychological support, staffed by specialized professionals.
- **Mobile Component:** For those who truly cannot move, mobile brigades complement the centers, delivering wheelchairs and technical aids directly to homes. It is participatory because it operates under co-management agreements with local Parish Governments, who help identify beneficiaries and maintain the facilities.



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Describe the impact of your initiative

Use in your answer the following elements: How many people are benefitting from the initiative?

How do you measure its effect and are you achieving your objectives?

The impact is structural: we have achieved **100% coverage of rural parishes**, something unprecedented in Ecuador. The 60 rehabilitation centers currently serve thousands of patients monthly who previously had zero access to therapy. In 2024, combining centers and mobile brigades under the "Social Justice" framework, we reached over **94,000 people**.

We measure effect by "Lives and Hopes Recovered" (Recuperando Vidas y Esperanzas). Beyond statistics, we measure the restoration of functionality: a stroke survivor walking again, or a child with disabilities gaining independence. This reduces the economic burden on families and mitigates social conflict derived from abandonment. By having a functioning center in their own parish, citizens feel the tangible protection of the state, strengthening social peace.

Describe how innovative your initiative is

How is this initiative different from others, original in its approach?

The innovation lies in its **radical decentralization**. While most governments invest in "Mega-Health Complexes" in capital cities (which rural poor cannot reach), GADP Manabí innovated by creating a **"Micro-Network" of 60 community centers**.

It is original because of its **Co-Management Model**: we don't impose the centers; we build them with the local territory. We use existing community infrastructure and equip it with high-tech rehabilitation gear. This approach transforms the concept of public health from a "service provided from above" to a "community asset managed from within." In a security crisis, these 60 centers act as "Sanctuaries of Peace," visible safe havens in every rural territory.



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Describe the sustainability of your initiative

How will the effects of the initiative sustain? How is the initiative funded, and how can it continue in the long run?

Sustainability is robustly secured through **institutionalized co-responsibility**. We moved beyond a donor-recipient model to a partnership model via legal agreements (**Convenios**) with the Parish and Cantonal GADs (local governments).

- **Joint Funding:** Resources are pooled. Typically, the local Parish GAD provides and maintains the physical facility, while the Provincial GAD (Manabí) finances the specialized equipment and professional staff.
- **Local Ownership:** Because the Parish GAD invests its own budget into the facility, they become defenders of the project. It is no longer "the Prefect's project" but "our parish center."
- **Long-term:** These agreements outlast political terms. The infrastructure and equipment are permanent assets of the community, ensuring the service continues regardless of administration changes.

Describe the difficulty, complexity or danger of the situation

What are the biggest challenges? What expected and unexpected difficulties did you encounter along the way? How did you overcome these?

Operating in the second most violent province of Ecuador poses immense logistic and security challenges. Establishing 60 centers meant entering territories often controlled by criminal groups. The complexity lay in convincing staff to work in these high-risk rural areas.

We overcame this through the **alliance with Parish GADs**. Local authorities, who know the territory best, provide the necessary security guarantees and social legitimacy. By having a permanent physical presence (the center) rather than just a passing vehicle, we established "safe zones" respected by the community. The challenge was turning state presence from a target into a valued asset; we achieved this by serving the most vulnerable (elderly, disabled), creating a protective social shield around our centers.



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Describe the replicability or learning potential of your initiative

In what way do you think your initiative can serve as an example for other local governments that are facing similar challenges?

This initiative is a blueprint for **multi-level governance**. It demonstrates how a Provincial government can effectively coordinate with smaller Parish governments to achieve 100% coverage.

Replicability: Any regional government can replicate this by using the "Agreement Model" (Convenios): sharing costs to maximize impact.

National Learning: The Government of Ecuador (MDI) used our security planning methodology as a benchmark. Furthermore, our model of decentralized rehabilitation is being observed as a more efficient alternative to centralized hospitals, proving that you can deliver specialized health services in rural areas if you build strong local partnerships.

Describe how the initiative is embedded in the local government organisation

What is the role of the local government in the initiative? Are you working together with other partners, and who has the lead? Does the local government fund the initiative?

The GADP Manabí acts as the **Network Architect and Main Funder**.

- **Role:** We define the technical standards, hire the medical staff, and purchase the rehabilitation equipment for all 60 centers. We ensure equity in service quality across the province.
- **Partners:** We work hand-in-hand with **60 Parish and Cantonal GADs**. They are operational partners who maintain the infrastructure.
- **Lead:** The GADP Manabí maintains the strategic lead and supervision, ensuring that all projects are oriented to safeguard the security of people, regardless of where they live.