



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:

Escuelas del Productor (Farmer Field Schools)

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

31/07/2024 – Ongoing (Part of the 2030 Productive Development Plan)

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 **rural poverty and the lack of technical opportunities** for small farmers, which historically forces migration to violent urban belts or makes rural areas vulnerable to illicit activities. Manabí is the agricultural heart of Ecuador, but low productivity and climate change have threatened the livelihoods of thousands of families.

The context is crucial: In a country facing a security crisis, **food sovereignty is a matter of national security**. The jury must know that our territory has immense potential but faces the risk of depopulation and loss of generational farming knowledge. If the youth leave the countryside due to lack of profit, they become vulnerable to recruitment by criminal groups in cities. We are securing the territory by making the land productive and dignified again.

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?

The "Escuelas del Productor" (Farmer Field Schools) is a technical training initiative based on the "**Learning by Doing**" methodology directly on the farm. Its aim is to transform subsistence farming into profitable, sustainable agro-business.

Key activities implemented:

1. **Establishment of 80 Field Schools:** We have deployed 80 active schools across 26 parishes, covering key crops (cacao, maize, coffee).
2. **Tech Transfer:** Providing soil analysis kits and certified seeds to 2,000 producers to scientifically improve yields.
3. **Agroecology:** Teaching sustainable practices that reduce dependency on expensive chemical fertilizers, thereby increasing net income.
4. **Associativity:** Organizing individual farmers into associations to sell together at fair prices, breaking the cycle of intermediary exploitation.



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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 initiative currently benefits **2,000 producers directly** and approximately **8,000 people indirectly** (family members). The coverage is strategic, reaching 17 cantons.

We measure effect through:

1. **Productivity Increase:** Measuring yield per hectare before and after the technical intervention.
2. **Income Generation:** Tracking the reduction in production costs (via soil analysis and agroecology) and increase in sales price.
3. **Retention:** Measuring how many young farmers choose to stay on their land rather than migrate.
4. **We are achieving the objective of "Economic Peace":** families with stable incomes are families that contribute to a peaceful, stable community.

Describe how innovative your initiative is

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

Unlike traditional paternalistic programs that simply donate seeds, our innovation is **Cognitive Empowerment**. We don't just give fish; we teach how to farm effectively.

It is original because it integrates **Agroecology and Soil Science** into public policy. We perform over 2,000 physical-chemical soil analyses, giving poor farmers access to high-tech precision agriculture usually reserved for large corporations. Furthermore, the "Field School" concept turns the farm into a classroom, validating local knowledge ("Diálogo de Saberes") rather than imposing top-down instructions. It restores dignity to the profession of the farmer.



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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 guaranteed because this project is not an isolated event; it is embedded in the "**Plan de Fomento Productivo de Manabí**" (Provincial Production Plan), a long-term binding planning instrument.

1. **Financial:** The GADP Manabí has allocated over \$1,000,000 USD in direct investment, ensuring staff and supplies are covered.
2. **Technical:** The knowledge transferred remains. Once a farmer learns to analyze their soil or prune their cacao correctly, that knowledge generates value for a lifetime.
3. **Organizational:** By forming legal associations, farmers can continue accessing credit and markets even after the specific training cycle ends.

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?

The challenges are **geographical and climatic**. We operate in remote rural areas, often with difficult access roads, aggravated by the "El Niño" phenomenon which brings flooding and crop loss. This creates despair among farmers.

Another complexity is the **security risks in rural roads**. We overcame these by building strong trust networks. Our technicians are locals or deeply embedded in the community ("Extensionistas"), which provides them safe passage. We also overcame the challenge of skepticism: farmers were tired of broken promises. We regained trust by delivering tangible results (kits, analyses) promptly, proving that the GADP is a serious partner.



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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 proves that **Food Security is a Peace Strategy**. It serves as a model for any territory facing rural-to-urban migration.

- **Replicability:** The "Farmer Field School" methodology (ECA) is universal and cost-effective. It can be replicated in Africa, Asia, or Latin America for any crop.
- **Learning Potential:** We offer a blueprint on how to transition from "emergency aid" to "structural development." The key lesson is that technical assistance must go hand-in-hand with social organization. Other governments can learn how we used soil analysis not just as agronomy, but as a tool for economic justice.

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 is the **Principal Executor**. Through the Dirección de Fomento Productivo, we plan, fund, and execute the schools.

1. **Role:** We hire the expert agronomists and coordinate the 80 schools. We view the farmer not as a beneficiary, but as the engine of our economy.
2. **Partners:** We work with Parish Councils for logistics and local **Producer Associations**. We also coordinate with academia for soil research.
3. **Funding:** It is fully funded by the GADP budget (\$994,865 allocated), demonstrating that supporting the countryside is our political priority. Motto: "If the countryside does well, the city does well."