



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:

Plan de Convivencia Pacífica y Seguridad Humana (Peaceful Coexistence and Human Security Plan)

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 structural roots of violence in Manabí, a province of 1.7 million inhabitants that has become the epicenter of Ecuador's security crisis. Historically a peaceful region, Manabí is now the **second most affected province by violence** in the country due to the expansion of organized crime and drug trafficking routes.

The core problem is not just crime, but the breakdown of the social fabric caused by inequality, lack of opportunities for youth, and weak state presence in rural areas. The context is critical: Ecuador is facing an unprecedented wave of violence, and local governments (Prefecturas) constitutionally lack control over the national police or military. This leaves the population vulnerable to fear ("freedom from fear") and poverty ("freedom from want"). Our territory faced a dilemma: wait for national intervention or act within our competencies to protect our citizens through social prevention. We chose to act.

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 initiative is a comprehensive public policy shifting from a "state security" approach to a **"Human Security"** paradigm (UNDP). Its aim is to protect the vital core of human lives by addressing threats through five development axes rather than just policing.

Key activities include:

1. **"Entrenando Valores" (Training Values):** Sports academies for 18,000+ children to prevent criminal recruitment.
2. **"Libre, vivir sin violencia":** Comprehensive protection centers for women victims of gender-based violence.
3. **"Operación Justicia Social":** Mobile brigades bringing health and social services to remote, marginalized areas.
4. **"Escuelas del Productor":** Generating lawful economic livelihoods for 8,000+ farmers.

It is highly participatory, governed by the "Pacto por la Vida" (Pact for Life), a multi-stakeholder alliance involving civil society, academia, and the private sector. It prioritizes marginalized groups: rural populations, women, and at-risk youth often invisible to central planning.



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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 has restored the state's presence in vulnerable territories. In 2024, "**Operación Justicia Social**" **benefitted over 94,000 people** living in extreme poverty, providing health and social care. Our gender protection program achieved a 100% response rate for women requesting shelter and legal aid.

We measure effects through the **Provincial Observatory of Citizen Security**, a technical body we created to generate local data and evidence-based analysis. This allows us to move beyond intuition to scientific planning. We are achieving our objective of reducing social risk factors: by securing livelihoods for 7,000 farmers and keeping thousands of youths in sports programs, we are actively reducing the pool of vulnerable individuals susceptible to criminal recruitment, effectively building a "culture of peace" from the ground up.

Describe how innovative your initiative is

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

In a national context where security is traditionally managed with "Iron Fist" (Mano Dura) policies and militarization, our initiative is innovative because it redefines security as a **social development issue**. Unlike other local governments that limit themselves to donating vehicles to the police, the GADP Manabí assumes the role of a social architect.

The originality lies in operationalizing the **Human Security** concept into tangible local public investment. We integrated health, entrepreneurship, and rights protection as security strategies. Furthermore, the creation of a local **Observatory** is a distinct innovation in Ecuador, giving us data sovereignty to design tailored policies rather than relying solely on national crime statistics which often mask local realities.



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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 through financial commitment, institutionalization, and social ownership.

- **Financial:** The initiative is not a temporary project but a core part of the Provincial Development Plan (PDOT), funded directly by the GADP Manabí's annual budget.
- **Institutional:** We established the "Observatory" and the "Pacto por la Vida" governance structure, ensuring that technical planning survives political cycles.
- **Social:** By embedding programs like "Entrenando Valores" into the community fabric, we have created a demand-driven model. The communities themselves defend and sustain these spaces of peace. Long-term continuity is secured by empowering local actors to co-manage these safety nets.

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 biggest challenge is operating in a high-risk environment. **The country faces a wave of violence, and Manabí is the second most affected province**, meaning our teams often work in territories controlled by organized crime. An unexpected difficulty was the rapid escalation of homicide rates, which generated paralyzing fear in the population.

Another complexity was the legal restriction: local governments cannot command police forces. We overcame these by:

1. **Re-framing the narrative:** Focusing on "Human Security" allowed us to intervene legally through social programs.
2. **Building Trust:** Our "Pacto por la Vida" united the church, mayors, and police, legitimizing our presence in dangerous zones where the state had retreated. We countered violence with presence and opportunity.



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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?

Our initiative has proven so effective that it became a national benchmark. **The Government of Ecuador, through the Ministry of the Interior (MDI), developed a new methodology for making security plans based on our plan.** Previously, security planning at the local level was non-existent or disjointed; our model incentivized its elaboration nationwide.

This demonstrates high replicability: we proved that intermediate governments (Provinces/Regions) can lead security strategies without needing a police force. Our methodology of diagnosis (Observatory), articulation (Pact), and action (Social Prevention) serves as a blueprint for any local government worldwide facing violence with limited hard-security competencies.

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 plays the undisputed leading role. We are the architects, main funders, and executors of the policy. The initiative is not an isolated department's task; it is transversal—**all projects are oriented to safeguard the security of people.**

- **Role:** The Prefectura leads the "Pacto por la Vida" and coordinates the Observatory.
- **Partners:** We work with the National Police, Academia, 22 Municipalities, and International Cooperation, but the strategic direction comes from the GADP.
- **Funding:** We fully fund the core programs (Social Justice, Youth Values) through our investment budget, ensuring autonomy and stability.