



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:

Entrenando Valores (Training Values)

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

07/31/2023 – Ongoing (Currently in Season 5)

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 urgent problem of **criminal recruitment of minors**. In Manabí (1.6 million inhabitants), the expansion of drug trafficking gangs targets children as young as 10 years old to work as lookouts or dealers. This occurs due to a lack of safe recreational spaces and "idle time" in vulnerable neighborhoods.

The context is critical: Manabí is the second most violent province in Ecuador. In many marginalized areas, the only role models for children are gang leaders. The "law of the street" prevails. Families are disintegrating, and children are growing up in environments normalized by violence. We faced a stark reality: if the State does not occupy the children's free time with values and discipline, the gangs will occupy it with drugs and 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?

"Entrenando Valores" is a massive social prevention program that uses sports (soccer) as a pedagogical tool to build character and citizenship. Its aim is to create "**Safe Zones**" in 56 parishes where children learn discipline, teamwork, and ethics, shielding them from criminal influence.

Key activities implemented:

1. **Values-Based Sports Academies:** Free training sessions led by specialized coaches who act as mentors, covering 22 cantons.
2. **Comprehensive Care:** Beyond sports, we provide nutritional monitoring and psychological support to detect domestic violence or drug risks early.
3. **"Escuela para Padres" (School for Parents):** Workshops to strengthen family bonds and teach parents how to protect their children from digital and street risks.
4. **Championships for Peace:** Inter-cantonal tournaments that integrate communities previously divided by territorial gang rivalries.



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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 achieved massive scale. In its current phase (5th Season), we target **18,150 direct attentions/beneficiaries** (children and adolescents). This implies a positive impact on over 15,000 families across the province.

We measure effect through:

1. **Retention Rates:** Keeping children in the program means keeping them off the streets during high-risk hours.
2. **Behavioral Change:** Teachers and parents report improved discipline and grades in school.
3. **Health Indicators:** Detection and correction of malnutrition in participants.
4. **We are achieving our objective of social contention:** every child in a jersey holding a ball is a child that the gangs failed to recruit. We have created the largest "Peace Army" of youth in the province.

Describe how innovative your initiative is

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

Most sports programs focus on competition and finding "talents" for professional leagues. Our innovation is focusing on **Human Security and Mental Health**. "Entrenando Valores" doesn't prioritize winning matches; it prioritizes winning lives.

It is original because it transforms the Coach into a **Social Operator**. Our coaches are trained not just in tactics, but in identifying signs of sexual abuse, drug use, or depression. Furthermore, it integrates Nutrition and Psychology directly onto the soccer field, breaking the stigma of mental health care in rural areas. By bringing the psychologist to the pitch, we normalize asking for help.



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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 based on **Public Policy and Community Ownership**.

1. **Financial:** The program is fully funded by the GADP Manabí's annual investment budget under the "Social Justice" axis, guaranteeing stability beyond short-term sponsorships.
2. **Social:** The "Parent Committees" formed in each academy are deeply invested. They organize logistics and protect the spaces.
3. **Long-term:** We are creating a generation with internalized values of fair play and respect. Even if the program were to pause, these 18,000 children carry the ethical training into adulthood, creating a permanent cultural shift against violence.

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 greatest challenge is **territorial control by gangs**. In some neighborhoods, entering to train implies crossing "invisible borders" between rival factions. We faced the danger of parents being afraid to send their children out due to stray bullets or kidnappings.

We overcame this by establishing the Academies as **Neutral Zones of Peace**. We negotiated tacitly through community presence: the "Entrenando Valores" uniform is respected. The sheer volume of families involved creates a "human shield." We also faced the challenge of scarce infrastructure in rural areas, which we overcame by adapting community fields and empowering locals to maintain them, turning abandoned lots (crime hotspots) into active sports venues.



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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 model demonstrates that **Sports is the most cost-effective Crime Prevention tool**. It is highly replicable because every town, no matter how poor, has a field and a ball.

Learning Potential: Other governments can learn from our "Comprehensive Layering" methodology. Don't just throw a ball; layer it with nutrition, psychology, and values. We proved that a local government can build a massive youth network (18,000 kids) faster and more effectively than the police can build a surveillance network. It serves as a blueprint for "Soft Security" strategies in high-conflict zones worldwide.

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 **Executor and Guarantor**.

- **Role:** We directly hire the 129+ staff members (coaches, supervisors) and purchase all equipment (uniforms, balls). It is a flagship program of the Prefectura, directly supervised by the Directorate of Social Development.
- **Partners:** We collaborate with the local Football Leagues and Parish Councils (Juntas Parroquiales) for infrastructure use.
- **Lead:** The GADP leads 100% of the strategy, ensuring that the "Values Curriculum" is taught uniformly across the province, preventing the program from becoming just a recreational pastime.