



Strengthening Capacities for Peace, Security, and Violence Reduction in **Ecuador**

Timeframe: 19 December 2022 — 16 June 2025

Budget: US\$ 2,391,492.90

SDGs: 5, 10, 16

UN Implementing Entities: UNDP, UNODC and UN Women

Implementing partners:

Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Government, Municipality of Guayaquil

Background information

Ecuador has experienced a sharp increase in violence, social conflict, and the growing influence of organized crime, disproportionately affecting women, youth, and marginalized communities. These challenges are rooted in structural inequalities, weak governance, and limited access to basic services, particularly in high-risk urban areas such as Guayaquil. Violence, including homicide, gender-based violence, and the recruitment of youth by criminal groups, has undermined social cohesion, trust in institutions, and opportunities for participation and development. These dynamics highlight the need for integrated, preventive approaches that link national and local actors and promote peaceful coexistence through coordinated responses.

Goals and objectives

The programme aimed to strengthen the capacities of public institutions and civil society at national and local levels to prevent violence, manage social conflict, and promote peace and peaceful coexistence. Specifically, it sought to:

- 01.** strengthen institutional and societal capacities for prevention and conflict management;
- 02.** support the participatory design and implementation of policies and tools for citizen security and violence prevention;
- 03.** promote the participation and leadership of vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth; and
- 04.** foster safer, more inclusive environments through collaboration, social cohesion, and a culture of peace.

Beneficiaries

The programme targeted vulnerable populations, including youth, women, Afro-descendant communities, and residents of marginalized urban areas, particularly in Guayaquil, who face heightened exposure to violence and exclusion. Indirect beneficiaries included national and local institutions, civil society organizations, and communities across Ecuador, benefiting from strengthened policies, coordination, and capacities for prevention and peacebuilding.

Applying the Human Security Approach

The programme exemplified the human security approach by addressing interconnected drivers of violence across personal, community, economic and political dimensions, with a strong emphasis on prevention, inclusion, and root causes. It combined protection and empowerment strategies to support more sustainable and inclusive responses.

On the protection side, the programme strengthened the capacities of national and local institutions to deliver coordinated, preventive and rights-based responses. It supported the development of policies, methodologies and planning tools that integrate citizen participation, gender equality and human rights, while improving inter-institutional coordination and establishing mechanisms for dialogue and collaboration.

In parallel, the programme advanced empowerment by strengthening the capacities, agency and organization of communities, particularly women and youth. Through training, dialogue platforms and support to networks and local initiatives, it created safe spaces for participation and leadership. A multi-stakeholder approach brought together government, civil society, communities and international partners to co-design solutions and build trust, linking participatory spaces with institutional processes. The programme was implemented through an integrated, inter-agency approach to ensure coherent and multidimensional responses.

Achievements



Preventive governance strengthened: Adoption of key frameworks, including the co-created local citizen security planning guide, institutionalized by the Ministry of Interior, and contributions to national strategies on preventing child and adolescent recruitment.



Participation and agency expanded: Women and youth, through initiatives such as the Network of Women Peacebuilders and the Youth Agenda, became active agents shaping prevention strategies and policy processes.



Root causes of violence addressed: The programme supported a shift from reactive to preventive approaches, informing national frameworks and addressing structural drivers such as exclusion, weak coordination and low trust.



Resilience and institutional effectiveness enhanced: Training, dialogue platforms, and early warning mechanisms strengthened conflict management, coordination, and community resilience, enabling more coherent and anticipatory responses.