

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	10184
Project Name:	LDN Target-Setting and Restoration of Degraded Landscapes in Western Andes and Coastal areas
Countr(ies):	Ecuador
Implementing Agency:	FAO

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

LDN Target-Setting and Restoration of Degraded Landscapes in Western Andes and Coastal areas

Country

Ecuador

GEF ID

10184

Implementing Agency

FAO

Executing Entity

CONDESAN (Operating Partner)

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/8/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 3rd PIR

Objective

Prevent, reduce and reverse land degradation processes (SDG 2, 13, 15) to promote the sustainable development of rural communities, ensuring the provision of key ecosystem services and food sovereignty, within the framework of national efforts to achieve the LDN in Ecuador (2.4.1; 13.2.1; 15.3.1).

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Satisfactory

Development Objective

Satisfactory

Overall risk

Moderate Risk

Project Financing

4,835,750.00

Cumulative Disbursement

2,509,229.70

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

6/3/2021

Agency Approval

2/2/2021

Implementation Start 9/21/2021	First Disbursement 12/31/2021
Expected MTR 8/11/2024	Actual MTR
Expected Completion 12/31/2026	Actual Completion

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

The project has worked in the consolidation of processes aimed at improving national and local responses to land degradation. The National Land Degradation Observatory, constituted by research groups of nine universities, has started collecting data in three monitoring sites: 1) dry forest regeneration in San Marcos (Santa Elena), 2) water and soil interactions in degraded paramos in Salinas (Bolívar), and 3) impacts of reduced tillage in Cotacachi (Imbabura). The governance structure of the Observatory has also been defined collaboratively. Furthermore, the development of the Land Degradation Action Plan has continued, with a series of workshops held in different provinces to better capture land degradation dynamics and local action priorities.

At the subnational level, integrated land use planning and policy tools were developed to strengthen the enabling environment for the adoption of sustainable land management (SLM) practices. In Bolívar, a sustainable agricultural production strategy was developed in collaboration with the government of the province. Likewise, in Imbabura, a macro zoning to identify SLM priorities was developed.

Support for the adoption of SLM practices continued in the intervention sites, with second phases implemented in: 1) biological pest control using entomophagous insects in maize systems (Santa Elena), 2) establishment and enrichment of agroforestry systems with emphasis on guarango (*Caesalpinia spinosa*) in Urcuqui (Imbabura), 3) organic agricultural practices and integrated pest management in agrobiodiverse chakras (subsistence farms) in Cotacachi (Imbabura), 4) sustainable management of pastures and complementary water management and live fencing in milk production farms in Salinas (Bolívar). Additional practices have focused on the restoration of degraded dry forest (Santa Elena) and paramo (Bolívar) areas, and support for strengthening a tree nursery specialized in dry forest species in Santa Elena.

Sustainability for the implemented SLM practices is being promoted through work with related value chains. Commercial alliances have been established with three private businesses to secure better conditions for the supply of medicinal herbs (Cotacachi) and of toquilla fiber used in the production of Panama hats (Santa Elena). Complementary activities seek to strengthen local financial mechanisms such as savings banks in Cotacachi and Santa Elena, through development of internal regulations.

An effective capacity building strategy has been implemented, through visits to successful examples in the adoption of SLM practices (e.g. visit to sustainable cattle ranching farm in Imbabura) and in the development of locally rooted land governance processes (e.g. visit to initiatives in the Andean Choco region of Pichincha).

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

The main challenges in this FY are related to changes in operational conditions, and the need to enhance the sustainability of the LDN and SLM approaches promoted by the project at different scales. Operationally, challenges have arisen related to changes in the teams and directives of allied organizations. This causes delays in planned activities as transition periods can be substantial until the new teams regain knowledge regarding the approach and planned operations of the project. Also, the deterioration of the conditions of public security in the country has become a concern, especially for operations in the intervention site in the Coast.

Promoting the sustainability of the SLM practices and related processes (e.g. local governance arrangements) is taking a center place as the project entered the second half of its implementation period. Extended and complementary technical assistance activities have been identified to support a more effective adoption of SLM practices in the intervention sites, in practices related to sustainable management of pastures (Bolívar), strengthening local capacities to supply medicinal herbs for private businesses (Cotacachi), support for the adoption of SLM practices in smallholder farms in Cotacachi, improvement of production processes in milk and toquilla value chains.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

Profile	Stakeholder name	Type of partnership	Progress, results & Challenges on Stakeholder's Engagement
Government Institutions	Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE)	Main focal point of the Project. Continuous communication and validation of the progress in implementation.	Coordination and supervision by MAATE has continued normally, especially in the context of the LDN National Action Plan.
Government Institutions	Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle Management (MAG)	Main technical and political partner	Continuous communication and validation of the progress in implementation. Changes in authorities has required an induction to the current status of implementation of the project.
IGOs	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Implementing Agency	The mechanisms of supervision and technical and administrative support by FAO continue to be applied. Strategies are being identified to speed up the approval of financial reports and the disbursement of funds for the project. Delays in the disbursement of funds caused an operational pause in the fourth quarter of 2024.
Government Institutions	Decentralized Autonomous Government (DAG) of Imbabura	Partner	The project has developed an integrated land use planning tool, to identify opportunities to promote conservation, restoration, and sustainable agriculture in the province. Coordination with this DAG is also active in the implementation
Government Institutions	DAG of Bolivar	Partner	A sustainable agricultural production strategy was developed with the Bolivar DAG, to guide intervention in SLM practices in the main agricultural production systems in the Province.
Government Institutions	DAG of Santa Elena	Partner	Coordination has continued with the Santa Elena DAG in the implementation of biological control practices that diminish reliance on agrochemicals used in the corn productive systems, in the strengthening of the dry forest tree nursery, and in the support of operations of the biological control laboratory operated by the DAG.
Government Institutions	DAG of Chimborazo	Partner	With this DAG a management model is being developed for the production working group of the province, which seeks to establish a roadmap for the discussion around sustainable agriculture in Chimborazo.
Government Institutions	Tungurahua Fund for Paramo Conservation and Fight Against Poverty (FPTLP)	Partner	With the FPTLP, a set of guidelines to update paramo conservation plans was developed, that integrate transversally SLM practices.
Government Institutions	Association of Municipalities of Southwestern Tungurahua (FSO)	Partner	The paramo conservation plan for the municipalities of Mocha, Quero, Tisaleo, Cevallos is being developed in coordination with the FSO.
NGOs	Ecuadorian Fund Populorum Progressio (FEPP)	Partner	Technical assistance to adopters of sustainable pasture management practices has been coordinated with FEPP in the Simiatug parish.
NGOs	Foundation of Local Organizations of Salinas (FUNORSAL)	Partner	The authorities of FUNORSAL changed in december 2024. The coordination mechanism with FUNORSAL has been reestablished in the first semester of 2025.
NGOs	Sustainable Landscapes Foundation (PASOS)	Partner	In the first semester of 2025, a joint planning was conducted to identify activities that seek to strengthen the Province System of Areas of Conservation and Sustainable Land Use.
NGOs	Management Committee – Mojanda Cambugán Conservation and Sustainable Use Area (ACUS)	Partner	A joint planning was conducted to identify activities aimed at strengthening SLM practices and governance in the Mojanda Cambugan Conservation and Sustainable Land Use Area (ACUS)
NGOs	FUCAE Foundation	Partner	An operational arrangement has been developed with FUCAE to implement ecosystem restoration and sustainable cattle management in the upper elevational range of the Mojanda Cambugan Conservation and Sustainable Land Use Area (ACUS)
Private Sector entities	Nunalabs	Partner	Development of alliance to support supply of medicinal herbs in Cotacachi.
Private Sector entities	Cafe Galleti	Partner	Development of alliance to support supply of medicinal herbs in Cotacachi.
Private Sector entities	K. Dorzfaun	Partner	Development of alliance to support provision of toquilla by the Barcelona Artisanal Center
Others	Research groups at: Superior Polytechnic School of Chimborazo (ESPOCH), Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo (UNACH), Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), Universidad Técnica del Norte (UTN), Universidad Central del Ecuador (UCE)	Partners	A proposal for a governance model for the National Observatory of Land Degradation was developed in collaboration with the research groups at the universities currently participating in the Observatory.
Others	Indigenous Women's Organization of Cotacachi	Partner	Coordination with the Indigenous Women's Committee of Cotacachi has focused on the second phase of the implementation of SLM practices in chakras, and the strengthening of organizational capabilities through work in financial and non-financial mechanisms that support local families.
Others	Communities of the highlands of Salinas and Simiatug, Bolivar: Pachancho, Yurak Usha, Natawa, Yakubiana, Verdepamba, Pimbalo	Partner	The project uses the governance platforms of each community (e.g. Cabildos) and the working groups at the Salinas Parish level, and the province level to coordinate the implementation of SLM practices related to sustainable management of pastures and establishment of paramo conservation areas.

D. Gender Equality

Category	Yes/No	Briefly describe progress and results achieved during this reporting period.
a. Closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources	Yes	In this sense, the project maintains initiatives where the role of both men and women in the management of productive areas is fundamental, as they promote and make visible actions that maintain and enable the development and sustainability of SLM practices in the intervention sites. Thus, we can mention the following examples: - Active participation, women's leadership, and maintenance of SLM practices: This aspect is evident in the Costa sites with the Toquilla Straw Artisanal Processing Center in Barcelona and in the Sierra Norte sites with the CCMU and Coop. Vida Verde and Tumbabiro - Urcuquí - Imbabura where women play key leadership roles. - Sustaining production systems: The cases of the organizations Producoop, Cooperativa Yakubiana, and the Association of Livestock Farmers in Salinas - Bolívar - Sierra Centro show that, although the leadership role of the male gender is significant for cultural reasons, the importance of women in supporting the household is evident when men go to their farms and/or perform additional work, allowing for the implementation and sustainability of these measures. Some of these initiatives were identified in the project's practice synthesis study, which highlighted differences in gender roles.
b. Improving women's participation and decision making	Yes	The leadership role of women in the following organizations is highlighted: <i>Northern Sierra:</i> Vida Verde and Tumbabiro - Urcuquí - Imbabura, and <i>Coast:</i> Toquilla Straw Processing Artisanal Center in Barcelona - Santa Elena, where they decide, promote, and convene their members to implement SLM practices and generate alliances for market access. - Strengthening Women's Indigenous Organization in Cotacachi, with emphasis in building procedures to sustain a procurement process of medicinal herbs for private businesses, improving management skills and financial education, among other aspects. The project makes these roles visible and promotes their legitimization so that they are valued and generate equal opportunities for both access to benefits and market integration.
c. generating socio-economic benefits or services for women	Yes	In the cases mentioned, the women's activities generate economic resources for their families, which promotes equity at the family and community levels. -The project is developing alliances with private enterprises to provide access to markets in better condition for households and local organizations, with emphasis on activities that are led by women: 1) production of medicinal herbs for Galleti and Nunalabs, which commercialize teas and essences, respectively. 2) processing and procurement of toquilla fiber to K. Dorzfaum, which export Panama hats. Also, in April 2025, a pilot workshop was held with toquilla fiber producers and the women-led team at the Toquilla Straw Artisanal Processing Center in Barcelona-Costa to identify the impacts of adopting sustainable practices on costs and benefits along the value chain. The results of this exercise have also been incorporated into the design of the terms of reference for a consultancy that will evaluate the economic aspects of implementing SLM practices in three case studies, highlighting the gender-disaggregated benefits. The workshop will be defined in the second half of 2025.

E. Knowledge Management

Knowledge management and Learning (KML): Does the project have a KML strategy?	Yes
If YES, what is the implementation progress? In your answer, please describe how the project is fostering knowledge sharing and learning among stakeholders at national and sub-national level.	The KML strategy has three constitutive elements: 1) capacity building strategy, 2) communications strategy, and 3) publications and knowledge management items plan. In the context of these three components, the following main activities have been implemented to foster knowledge sharing and learning: - Identification of knowledge management products that have the potential to be generated within the framework of project implementation, reflecting its approach and comprehensive intervention at the territorial and institutional levels. - Identification of the elements that will be part of the final systematization of the project, the basic inputs and the systematization strategy, including recognition of lessons learned. - Coordination with the communications department for the development of both the Communications Strategy and the Knowledge Management Strategy, and identification of the need for additional technical and financial support.
If NO, how does the project identify, collect and document good practices?	
Please list good practices, including key-technical and/or institutional innovations, from the project thus far.	The main technical and institutional innovations so far include: - Creation of a network of research teams working coordinately in monitoring land degradation patterns, and the impacts of SLM practices under the umbrella of the National Land Degradation Observatory. - Development of market alliance arrangements with actors of the private sector (Nunalabs, Galleti and K. Dorzfaun) to secure better conditions in the supply of fresh herbs and toquilla fiber by local producers in Cotacachi and Santa Elena, respectively. - Supporting the adoption of biological control practices based on the use of benefic entomophagous insects in maize productive systems in Santa Elena.
Communication strategy: Does the project have a communication strategy?	Yes
Please provide a brief overview of the communications successes and challenges this fiscal year.	Between July 2024 and June 2025, several project activities have been supported in the field to document, record with photography and video, and generate high-quality communication products that will enable the project's long-term positioning among key stakeholders promoting LDN. Actions such as the creation of life stories, podcasts, and videos reflecting the perspectives of project beneficiaries are innovative proposals that have been presented during this period. Thus, the actions being implemented within the framework of the following campaigns are highlighted: - General "No Dañes la Tierra" campaign - Agroecological campaign in the Central Zone "Consume Bolívar" - Campaign to strengthen the "Santa Elena Saludable" biological control laboratory Initiatives that require significant coordination of stakeholders to position and disseminate the project's actions.
Human-interest story: Please share a human-interest story from your project, focusing on how the project has helped to improve people's livelihoods while contributing to achieving the expected Global Environmental Benefits. Please indicate any Socio-economic Co-benefits that were generated by the project. Include at least one beneficiary quote and	In order to demonstrate the implementation of SLM practices in the landscape of Salinas de Guaranda, Bolívar province, a video was created that captured the perceptions of the beneficiaries and key stakeholders involved in these practices. It also reflected the positive socio-environmental and productive impact that the project's intervention is having in this area. The objective of this material is to generate synergies among the various stakeholders and promote SLM initiatives at the provincial and national levels.

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	Towards the halfway point of the project's effective operation period, some budget adjustment needs have been identified, which were raised at the project's last Steering Committee meeting (February 2025). These initiatives seek to expand the positive impacts in the territories and with target groups, strengthen an enabling environment that promotes the adoption and sustainability of SLM practices, consolidate the ONDT Observatory, broaden the focus of capacity-building processes, and strengthen the project's communication and knowledge management processes. The adjustment does not imply a modification of the project's total budget, but rather a rebalancing of investment items.
Implementation Schedule	
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	A new social risk has been identified: deterioration of the public security context, due to the conditions Ecuador has been experiencing in recent months. However, this does not change the overall risk rating for the project for the 2025 fiscal year.
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Northern Highlands	-0.196167	-77.998333	3,655,635

Location Description:

Areas corresponding to forests, páramos and agricultural lands that extend from the southern limit of the Cotacachi Cayapas Ecological Reserve (RECC) in Imbabura towards the province of Pichincha;

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Central Highlands	-1.818667	-78.521667	3,654,870

Location Description:

It covers the páramos and the agricultural mosaic, the area surrounding the Chimborazo Faunal Production Reserve (RPFC) and the slopes of the Carihuairazo volcano in the provinces of Tungurahua, Chimborazo and Bolívar

Activity Description:

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Coast	-2.268333	-80.341667	7,062,138

Location Description:

It includes forests (dry and humid) and the agricultural mosaic along the Chongón Colonche coastal range in the provinces of Manabí and Santa Elena.

Activity Description:

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	GEFID10184_2025PIR_FAO_Ecuador