

ECUADOR

CONTEXT

Ecuador has 25 bioclimatic zones, 11 of which are arid, semi-arid or dry sub-humid. Six of Ecuador's ten agro-ecological zones are the most desertification-prone areas in the country: the dry coastal corridor; the highlands; the Andean valleys; the Andean hillsides; the southern central range; and the Galapagos Islands. Ecuador has an extremely high deforestation rate of 2.3%, and almost 47.9% of the country is affected by erosion problems. In the provinces most affected by desertification, vegetation cover is only 25-30%, erosion affects 55-75% of the land, and 64- 80% of the population lives in poverty.

Ecuador ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in October 1995, and has since designed a National Action Programme (NAP) to combat desertification and mitigate the impacts of drought. Establishment of a National Coordination Unit and provincial level offices addressing the issues of land degradation and desertification were identified as the essential first step in NAP implementation. The UNCCD National Focal Point is the Ministry of Environment's Biodiversity Department.

A recent analysis by the Inter-Sectoral Group to Harmonize Public Policies for Sustainable Land Management (SLM), facilitated by the Global Mechanism (GM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), identified the main causes for land degradation and desertification in Ecuador as:

- lack of attention to land degradation at all levels and in all sectors;
- lack of policies and instruments for integrated SLM planning;
- inappropriate farming practices;
- the expansion of pastures for livestock production;
- forest fires and the use of fire in agriculture; and
- reforestation programmes that focus on monocultures of exotic species, recently including biofuels.

CHALLENGES

Despite significant national efforts - with international support - to conserve Ecuador's biological and agro-ecological diversity, land degradation continues to be severe, and is one of the main driving factors behind high rates of emigration.

In January 2007, the new government started to reform policies and planning, establishing a National Planning Secretariat (SENPLADES) to take charge of formulating national development policies and budgets plans. A new State Constitution was approved by referendum on 28 September 2008. The national government and this Constitution follow a new approach to development, based on social welfare, harmony with nature and innovative modalities for public investment and international cooperation. As part of the reform, the government is strengthening national budgets, investments and social programmes, and increasing the focus on food security access to land and watershed management.

The reform is a valuable opportunity for strengthening SLM through the formulation of laws, programmes and projects financed mainly by domestic funds, for aligning multilateral, bilateral and innovative investments with national priorities, and for increasing donor coordination. Following the GM's activities in Ecuador, the new Constitution considers the conservation of productive soils and the application of measures for combating desertification, erosion and pollution as national priorities. SLM is being mainstreamed into the National Development Plan and at the inter-ministerial level.



Map courtesy of IFAD

Total Area: 28 million ha
Population (million): 13.3
Population growth: 1.2%
Rural population: 38.2%
Poverty: 45% (74.7% rural, 40.4% urban)
Extreme poverty: 13.3% (24% rural, 8.9% urban)
Human Development Index: 0.772
Illiteracy: 9%
Per capita gross national product (GNP): USD 3 900
Forest cover (million ha): 10.8
Agricultural Land: 12.6 million ha
UNCCD ratification (year): 1995



The Global Mechanism (GM) was established under Article 21 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and began its operations in October 1997. The GM is defined as an organizational entity mandated "to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms... [and]... to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources to affected developing country Parties."

ECUADOR

COMMON OBJECTIVES

The GM is supporting the design of an Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS) in Ecuador. SENPLADES has requested the GM and FAO to support its Harmonization of Public Policies for SLM (HPP-SLM Ecuador) process, which aims to strengthen SLM in sectoral policies, the National Development Plan and the National Rural Development Strategy to 2022. A newly established inter-ministerial platform for SLM (the HPP Group) includes the main national institutions involved in land management, such as the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Economic and Social Inclusion, Energy and Mines. SENPLADES has requested the HPP Group to support the design of a National Rural Development Strategy with planning and capacity building. This will include the development of national and sub-national strategies and programmes that are in harmony with the NAP and the objectives of the UNCCD Ten-Year Strategy.

Within the IFS framework, particular attention is given to designing an innovative financing mechanism for SLM that will channel funds for climate change and compensation of ecosystem services through existing national microfinance mechanisms and watershed management funds aimed at restoring degraded pastures through agroforestry (environmental livestock management). This financing mechanism is being designed in close coordination with FAO, the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD,) the Ecuadorian Water Protection Fund, local governments, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Market access and trade for agroforestry products from degraded lands will be promoted through the GM-BioTrade Programme, involving the Ministry of Environment, the Corporation for Promotion of Exports and Imports and Ecociencia.

WHERE DO WE STAND ON IMPLEMENTATION?

The GM and FAO have financed a national assessment of land degradation, with recommendations on SLM policies, strategies and programmes, which was carried out under the SLM Harmonization of Public Policies (HPP) process and will be used to inform the updating of the National Development Plan update at the end of 2008. The document will also support design of the National Rural Development Strategy to 2022, which is just starting.

Once the relevant modalities have been set up, the HPP Group will support the design of the National Rural Development Strategy with planning and capacity building activities for SLM issues.

Design of the innovative financing mechanism for using climate change and ecosystem service funds for livestock management in Ecuador and Peru is expected to be completed by March 2009. The mechanism will encourage investments from the private sector, bilateral and multilateral funds and climate change initiatives for use in restoring degraded pastures, following the Global Environment Facility (GEF) sylvo-pastoral project implemented by CATIE.

Design of the GM BioTrade Programme to strengthen the value chains for products from degraded lands is nearly complete. For its implementation, the programme will seek to mobilize resources from the private sector, national trade programmes and international cooperation.

NEXT STEPS

- Follow-up on HPP-SLM support to the National Development Plan and the National Rural Development Strategy to 2022, through capacity building at sub-national levels.
- Design the IFS for land degradation/SLM initiatives that support the National Rural Development Strategy.
- Design the innovative financing mechanism for using climate change and ecosystem service funding in livestock management.
- Mobilize resources for implementing the GM-Biotrade Programme.
- Support the design of instruments to operationalize the new Constitution in areas related to soil protection, combating desertification, human well-being, land degradation and food security.

Map courtesy of IFAD



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ing. Jorge Guzmán
UNCCD Focal Point
Ministry of Environment
ECUADOR



Mr Alejandro Kilpatrick
Programme Coordinator,
Latin America & the Caribbean
a.kilpatrick@global-mechanism.org