

Ecuadorian Youth in Climate Action: A Call for Change



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Context

Ecuador has established a robust policy framework for addressing climate change, incorporating international regulations and promoting adaptation and mitigation as state policies, despite having an economy derived from extractive industries such as mining and petroleum.

Entities such as the Subsecretariat for Climate Change under the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Ecological Transition (MAATE), focus on these policies and thanks to UNICEF brokering, these institutions have actively fostered youth engagement and integrated an intergenerational perspective into their Adaptation and Mitigation Plans, as well as their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

Program Approach

In Ecuador, UNICEF works on strategies that focus on placing children and youth at the center of climate policies, empowering them as agents of change, strengthening their capacities, and protecting them from the impacts of climate change.

In this context, the Ecuador Country Office contracted a young coordinator to work with youth organizations on projects that promote the development of child-sensitive climate policies and encourage their active and informed participation in the national climate agenda. The pillars underpinning the initiatives that involve young people and adolescents are awareness, advocacy, policy negotiation, and strengthening of youth-led movements.

Results

Policy Negotiation

Development of Child-Sensitive Climate Policies – NDC

UNICEF Ecuador, with the support of MAATE and UNDP, organized the workshop “Youth Participation - On the Road to NDCs” for 40 young people coming from 16 cities with the objective of training young people on climate change and child-sensitive climate policies. During the workshop, young participants suggested commitments to be included in the new NDCs, such as environmental education, risk and disaster management, health, energy transition, sustainable agriculture, and to promote youth participation in formal spaces of the national climate agenda within the new NDC formulation, which was later submitted through an official letter to the Ministry of Environment.

Following the training, youth representatives participated in technical workshops conducted by MAATE to formulate Ecuador’s Second NDC, alongside civil society actors, the private sector, the public sector, and academia. This was the first time in Ecuador that children, adolescents, and young people participated in the development of a Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).



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Speaking and educating girls about climate change is also about creating social change within their communities.

— María Esperanza de la Cruz



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It is important to understand that young people can influence change, that our footprint matters, every step we take, every effort we make with communities and the networks we build are significant. If I have an idea, I need to connect with other young people so that together, we can make a change.

— Renata Rodríguez



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Strengthening of Youth Led Movement

► Climate Academy

The Ecuador Climate Academy took place in November 2022. Through virtual workshops and masterclasses, 11 young people from all over Ecuador enhanced their capabilities for taking climate action. Participants learned about awareness raising and advocacy, public policy negotiation, and the implementation of actions that promote ecosystem conservation and biodiversity through sustainable development. During this process, they developed their own environmental projects, which were presented at the closure of the Academy on a field trip to an indigenous community in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Participants then went on to implement their environmental projects.

► Climate Action Tools

In-person and virtual workshops were conducted to introduce the regional Climate Action Toolkit, with a special focus put on the Ecuador edition. The workshops have been carried out with adolescents and young people from schools, colleges, and communities in Tena and Puyo in the Amazon region. Meanwhile, virtual workshops were developed to reach adolescents and young people from all over the country. The dissemination of the climate action booklet during capacity-building workshops reached 400 adolescents and young people in Puyo, 80 in Tena, and the online version reached almost 200 adolescents and young people.

Awareness and Advocacy

► Local Conference of Youth - LCOY

Youth activists with the support of UNICEF and other organizations hosted the Local Conference of Youth in Loja, a city in the south of Ecuador, in September 2023. The event was the culmination of a series of workshops and training for 150 young Ecuadorian activists who developed the “Declaration of Youth on Climate Change”.

Key Lessons

- ▶ UNICEF brokering with national environmental authorities is key to developing processes that involve youth participation in the national climate agenda. It is important to keep strengthening and coordinating joint actions with national authorities and demonstrate the value of youth participation in policy development.
- ▶ To support youth participation, it is crucial to build youth's capacities on general aspects of climate change as well as on how to conduct advocacy and strengthen a youth movement.
- ▶ UNICEF Ecuador supported participation of one young advocate as part of the official delegation of the Ecuadorian government to COP 28 (2023), which represents the perfect completion of the journey started with capacity building on young advocates and continued with brokering between government and young people.

Plans for the Future

- ▶ UNICEF will continue supporting new generations of emerging young climate change leaders, ensuring this as a methodology to be replicated for the future. UNICEF will support the national government to develop the Second NDC with a focus on children and youth.
- ▶ UNICEF will continue to support the implementation of the Agreement on Biological Diversity (CBD) and is establishing a chapter for Ecuador in the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, with the purpose of highlighting the role of youth in biodiversity conservation in the face of climate change, and securing capacity building for youth representation at COP on Biodiversity.
- ▶ UNICEF will co-create with young people new educational material such as booklets about sustainable indigenous practices (such as agroecology, rain harvesting or soil management) and its use within communities to adapt to climate change, and about the country's biodiversity, threats, reduction of impacts and how it can be used to mitigate climate change.
- ▶ UNICEF will continue working on training and capacity building on environmental education along with the Undersecretary of Climate Change, within the framework of the National Strategy for Action for Climate Empowerment.

Focal points

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