

# Programme Conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems in Ecuador

## Context

Andean mountain ecosystems are of outstanding importance for biodiversity, as well as for the provision of environmental services such as the regulation of hydrologic balance. The Andean mountains ensure the supply of drinking water to rural and urban communities and also irrigation for agricultural production areas.

In the Andean highlands of Ecuador there are protection mechanisms such as the National System of Protected Areas, as well as private initiatives such as the Water Funds, which conserve these mountain ecosystems. Nevertheless, the “páramo” highlands require the application of large-scale protection measures inside and outside of these eco-systems.

The local population that lives mostly from agriculture and livestock activities recognizes the need to protect mountain ecosystems through the application of innovative incentives for conservation and sustainable use, nevertheless, the lack of alternative sources of income forces them to expand agricultural production in sensitive and fragile natural areas.

The Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE)’s programme “Conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems” is financed by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The programme’s objective is to improve the restoration of mountain ecosystems by strengthening local capacities in territorial planning issues, creating alternative and sustainable sources of income for the population together with facilitating knowledge exchange on the sustainable management of mountain ecosystems, in order to adopt measures which will restore degraded areas and promote a green recovery.

The programme will be implemented in specific areas of the provinces of Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, Tungurahua, Cañar and Bolívar. The target group is the rural population of the Andean mountain ecosystems of Ecuador, especially indigenous and mestizo small-scale farmers who organize themselves into production communities and practice sustainable agriculture and livestock activities.

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| Program Name:           | Conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems in Ecuador  |
| Commissioned by:        | Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development - BMZ  |
| Region of intervention: | Provinces: Cotopaxi, Tungurahua, Chimborazo, Bolívar, Cañar y Azuay.  |
| Executing by:           | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  |
| Duration:               | 2020 – 2024   |
| German contribution:    | € 7 million in technical assistance   |
| ODS (among others)      |    |

## Strategy



The programme will provide technical advice to strengthen the skills and capacities of key stakeholders in the fields of nature conservation, water resources management and sustainable agriculture, through the development and implementation of strategies to maintain and restore ecosystem services of the Andean mountains. The programme's skills development strategy focuses on three levels: At the societal level, government structures are reinforced in order to strengthen co-operation and make concerted efforts for the interests of the main actors in territorial planning. At the organizational level, the MAATE will reinforce its role to coordinate the conservation of biodiversity and address climate change. Local production communities are also organizationally strengthened within the framework of selected value chains. On a personal level, the professionals and managers of the MAATE, the MAG and the GAD, as well as certain NGOs and production communities, will receive support to achieve a green recovery and promote the sustainable use of high mountain ecosystems.

## Lines of action

The programme has a national focus that is oriented to implement restoration measures aligned with the NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) in the water heritage and natural heritage sectors and a local focus, based on the following lines of action:

**Income generation:** Farmers and production communities are empowered in promoting the value chain and services by introducing sustainable, profitable and climate-resilient approaches. The objective is to promote income sources for the local population and

reduce environmentally unfriendly practices. This line of action has a special focus on rural women.

**Conservation and restoration:** Local communities and government agencies are supported in the implementation of initiatives to protect sensitive areas of mountain ecosystems threatened by degradation and climate change. Ecosystem restoration will be promoted with the active participation of the local population.

**Governance:** Focuses on strengthening collective decision-making processes for land-use planning and the protection of mountain ecosystems. In this sense, the programme supports the development and application of mechanisms in which the main agents of territorial planning and development can co-ordinate their interests and needs.

**Knowledge management:** The programme promotes the conceptualization and development of a knowledge platform or network in order to improve its management of mountain ecosystems. The knowledge platform aims to allow representatives of state institutions, environmental NGOs, experts, universities, institutes and Water Funds to exchange, deepen, process and disseminate their applied experiences and lessons learnt.

The programme Conservation and sustainable use of mountain ecosystems is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in coordination with ECO Consult and the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN).

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