

Cultivating Just Resilience

A Gender Approach in the REDD+ Plan for Zamora Chinchipe

Case Study Database

A compilation of good practices and lessons learned to bring innovative subnational solutions to global problems

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Introduction

The Sembrando Vida plan in Zamora Chinchipe is an initiative developed within the framework of the REDD+ Implementation Plan, with a focus on forest conservation and climate change mitigation. It seeks to reduce deforestation and forest degradation through sustainable strategies that integrate local communities in the management of natural resources. Through inclusive financing mechanisms, training in environmental management and strengthening of local regulations, Sembrando Vida seeks to ensure a just transition to a green and resilient economy.

Project summary

The REDD+ plan Sembrando Vida in Zamora Chinchipe has a dedicated Gender Action Plan (GAP) to ensure that women, especially rural and indigenous women, participate equitably in sustainable forest management. It is based on a participatory gender diagnosis that identifies the structural barriers that limit women's participation in environmental management and designs strategies to strengthen their leadership, economic autonomy and access to sustainable productive opportunities. The plan aims to transform structures of inequality and ensure that the transition to a green economy is equitable and inclusive.

Key information

Location: Zamora Chinchipe, Ecuador

Focus areas: Gender and biodiversity; forest conservation; climate justice; just resilience

Carried out in: 2024-2025

Sustainable Development Goals addressed:

SDG 5, 13 and 15

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets addressed:

Targets 22 and 23

Special Collection

This case study is part of a special collection developed within the framework of Regions4's work on **Subnational Just Resilience**, with the support of the **Government of Scotland**. Its objective is to identify, highlight, and analyze experiences led by regional governments in the Global South that exemplify approaches and actions integrating environmental sustainability with social and/or economic justice. Each case is analyzed based on Just Resilience criteria (available here).

Just Resilience criteria addressed:

1.1.1.; 1.1.3.; 1.1.5.; 1.2.1.; 2.1.1.; 2.1.2.; 2.1.3.; 2.1.4.; 2.2.1.; 2.2.2.; 2.2.5.; 3.1.2.; 4.1.1.; 4.1.2.; 5.2.1.; 5.2.3.

Author

Regions4, in collaboration with the Prefecture of Zamora Chinchipe and with support from the Scottish Government

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The province of Zamora Chinchipe, located in the Amazon region of Ecuador, is a territory of great biodiversity, with significant natural wealth and cultural diversity represented by indigenous peoples and nationalities.

In recent years, deforestation and forest degradation have increased due to the expansion of agricultural land, legal and illegal mining and indiscriminate logging. According to data from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition, the rate of deforestation in Zamora Chinchipe is approximately 4,919 hectares per year, accounting for 35.62% of total deforestation in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

Focus on Gender and Territorial Inequalities

Gender inequalities in the province are marked, affecting mainly rural and indigenous women. These inequalities manifest themselves in limited access to land, natural resources, funding and decision-making. According to the Zamora Chinchipe Development and Land Use Plan (PDOT), only 11.8% of the owners of agricultural production units are women. In addition, rural women work on average 25 hours more per week than men due to the burden of unpaid care work.

Gender-based violence is also a serious problem in the region, with indicators that exceed the national and regional average. The lack of access to basic services, education and employment opportunities accentuates the vulnerability of women and girls, limiting their autonomy and active participation in the sustainable development of the territory.

The REDD+ plan and its integrated approach

The REDD+ plan Sembrando Vida in Zamora Chinchipe seeks to halt deforestation and forest degradation by promoting conservation and sustainable forest management with the participation of local stakeholders. This plan incorporates a gender approach with the aim of reducing structural inequalities affecting women and ensuring their equal participation in ecosystem conservation and restoration actions.

Regulatory Framework and International Commitments

Ecuador has ratified multiple international conventions that promote gender equality in the field of environment and sustainable development, including:

-Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);

-Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará);

-2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 5 and SDG 13);

-Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement);

At the national level, the Constitution of Ecuador and laws such as the National Agenda for Gender Equality 2021-2025 and the National REDD+ Plan (2016-2025) establish guidelines for gender mainstreaming in environmental policies.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIONS

Participatory Construction Process of the REDD+ Investment Plan

Within the framework of the REDD+ plan for Zamora Chinchipe, a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was developed as a comprehensive strategy to ensure the equitable inclusion of women and men in sustainable forest management. Its main objective is to promote women's active participation in decision-making, access to resources and the equitable distribution of benefits derived from forest conservation and climate change mitigation initiatives.

The GAP within REDD+ was designed based on a detailed analysis of gender gaps in the province, including dialogue sessions with women in the territory. The GAP identifies the following as priority areas:

-Equitable access to land and natural resources;

-Active participation in environmental decision-making;

-Strengthening women's capacities and leadership;

-Promotion of sustainable productive alternatives;

-Prevention of gender-based violence and strengthening of support networks.

The GAP is a fundamental tool to ensure that the benefits of forest conservation reach women and men equitably. Through strategies of inclusion and equity, it seeks to transform structures that perpetuate inequality, guaranteeing fair opportunities for women in decision-making and access to economic and environmental resources. In this way, Sembrando Vida not only contributes to reducing deforestation, but also strengthens and promotes a transition towards a green and sustainable economy that is inclusive and equitable.



Plan Development Process

The development of the GAP followed a series of steps that ensured its inclusive approach, applicability and effectiveness in the territory. The first step was to carry out a gender diagnosis, which allowed us to understand the existing inequalities in the province and how they affect women's participation in environmental management.

Identification of key stakeholders, including community leaders, government institutions and women's organisations, was carried out in order to promote participatory implementation of the plan. A key part of this process was the identification of gender gaps and inequalities, including the unfavourable socio-economic conditions that perpetuate poverty among rural women, the marked sexual division of labour, the differential effects of climate change on women's livelihoods, the exclusion of women in the management of natural resources and the lack of participation in decision-making processes.

To address these inequalities, the GAP designed concrete strategies ranging from facilitating access to productive resources to promoting women's economic autonomy through sustainable projects. In addition, the GAP prioritised awareness-raising and training on gender equity issues, providing tools and knowledge to strengthen women's leadership in forest management. These needs were identified during various participatory moments carried out to draw up the GAP. Spaces for dialogue and reflection were held with women who live in areas that are the main focal points of deforestation in the province.

In addition, an essential aspect of the implementation process is the monitoring and evaluation of the actions implemented, which allows for adjustments to be made and ensures the effectiveness of the interventions.



Main Lines of Action of the Plan

The GAP is structured around several lines of action that seek to transform the conditions that limit women's equal participation in forest management. Without actively promoting women's participation in forest management and decisions related to sustainable agricultural practices, there is a risk that women and youth will be excluded from important decision-making spaces, weakening their influence in planning and plan implementation. The GAP commits to actively promote women's effective participation and leadership in all actions and decision-making spaces of the project. This will ensure that women's voices and perspectives are fully considered in the implementation and direction of the project. This includes the development of the Provincial Climate and Forests Board.

Another major strategy focuses on capacity building. It has specific actions to include women in decision-making through leadership training programmes and the creation of opportunities in themed committees with equal participation of women and men.

Another key line of action is ensuring equitable access to natural resources and benefits generated by REDD+ initiatives. There is a risk that the benefits and opportunities generated by the Sembrando Vida plan will not be distributed equally between men and women, which could result in a persistent gap in access to resources and opportunities, disproportionately affecting rural women in Zamora Chinchipe. To mitigate this, the plan proposes incorporating gender indicators and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits, equal access, use and control of natural resources, productive assets and technological innovations. In addition, specific affirmative actions will be implemented to economically empower women, which will not only contribute to improving household food security, but also to strengthening resilience to climate change, reducing the vulnerability of beneficiary groups.

Gender mainstreaming in local policies is another fundamental axis of the plan. To this end, regulations and ordinances are being updated to include gender equity criteria in forest management and land-use plans.

The plan also recognises the differentiated impacts of climate change, as women and men may be affected differently by its effects. It therefore promotes the consideration of these differences and the design of measures that address gender-specific needs, developing specific strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change on women and men of different ages.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, it is proposed that specific mechanisms be created to continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of the plan's actions from a gender perspective, including the implementation of monitoring systems that collect and analyse gender-disaggregated data, as well as periodic evaluations to adjust strategies where necessary.

In addition, the involvement of youth in productive and environmental activities is considered, through the organisation of education and training programmes that promote the active participation of young people in agricultural and environmental activities, favouring an intergenerational approach in the development of the project.

Finally, specific strategies for the prevention of gender-based violence in forest communities are implemented to ensure safe environments for women and to promote the strengthening of community support networks. These actions are linked to the work of local and national institutions responsible for the protection of women's rights.



Expected Results

The implementation of these activities will serve to:

-Increase women's participation in forest resource management.
-Improve women's access to funding and benefits from the REDD+ plan.
-Reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over land.
-Promote conservation models that integrate women and men equally.
-Reduce the incidence of gender-based violence in participating communities.



How does the project promote just resilience in the territory?

We define Subnational Just Resilience as a conceptual and operational framework that enables the development of climate and ecosystem adaptation and transformation strategies in the face of environmental and climate shocks in an equitable and inclusive manner. Based on the principles of environmental justice, community participation and multi-level governance, just resilience seeks to ensure that climate and biodiversity responses not only integrate the needs and capacities of the most vulnerable communities, but also address the root causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, discrimination and lack of access to resources, by creating just, inclusive and sustainable solutions.

Checklist of principles and criteria for Just Resilience available here

1. Social Equity and Inclusion

Does the action specifically address the needs of communities most affected by climate change and biodiversity loss? Are attempts being made to reduce existing inequalities rather than reinforce them? **Criteria adressed: 1.1.1.; 1.1.2.; 1.1.3.; 1.1.4.; 1.1.5.; 1.2.1**

The plan contributes to the construction of social equity and inclusion through the analysis of inequalities and vulnerabilities and participatory diagnoses that assess the socio-economic and environmental conditions of women in the territory. In addition, equal access of women and men to the benefits of the Sembrando Vida plan is measured. The creation of spaces for dialogue makes it possible to assess community satisfaction and perceptions regarding their inclusion in decision-making.

2. Participatory Governance and Decision-Making

Did the affected population participate meaningfully in the decision-making process? Are the governance structures transparent and accountable? **Criteria adressed: 2.1.1.; 2.1.2.; 2.1.3.; 2.1.5.; 2.2.1.; 2.2.2.; 2.2.3.; 2.2.5.**

The plan stands out for promoting spaces for dialogue and the inclusion of women in decision-making, which is essential for their voices to be heard. The creation of the Provincial Climate and Forests Board is a clear example of how to structure governance in an inclusive and transparent manner. In addition, the establishment of monitoring mechanisms for all action lines ensures the transparency of the process in the long term.

3. Fair Distribution of Resources

Are funding mechanisms accessible to all communities, including those with fewer resources, and does the action prevent financial burdens falling disproportionately on disadvantaged groups? **Criteria adressed: 3.1.2.; 3.1.3.; 3.2.2.; 3.2.3**

The design of inclusive financial mechanisms aimed at equitably distributing project benefits is a clear step towards economic justice. Incorporating gender indicators to monitor the distribution of resources helps to prevent the concentration of benefits in privileged groups. However, the plan does not explicitly set out specific funding mechanisms.

4. Intergenerational Justice

Does the action consider the long-term impacts on future generations? Is there a strategy for sustaining resilience over time? **Criteria adressed: 4.1.3.**

The inclusion of young people in the activities, as well as the vision of sustainability of the results, shows a commitment to future generations. A commitment to education and training allows knowledge to be transferred and consolidated over time.

5. Social, Economic, and Ecological Sustainability

Does the action promote sustainable environmental practices while addressing resilience? To the extent possible, are nature-based solutions prioritized? **Criteria adressed: 5.1.1.; 5.1.3.; 5.2.1.; 5.2.2.**

A central role is given to the empowerment and active participation of women in environmental, agricultural, and forestry management, recognizing their capacity to lead climate change adaptation processes and generate sustainable production models. This integration promotes development that combines environmental protection with economic and social benefits, creating a virtuous circle in which the care of natural resources and the well-being of the population are mutually reinforcing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about this project, contact us by email at info@regions4.org to schedule an informational meeting, clarify your questions, and receive support for the implementation of similar projects.

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ABOUT REGIONS4

Regions4 (formerly known as nrg4SD) is a global network that exclusively represents regional governments (states, regions, and provinces) in UN processes, European Union initiatives, and global discussions on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents more than 40 members from 20 countries across 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation, and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action.

For more information, visit: www.regions4.org
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Chaussée d'Alsemberg 999 - B-1180, Brussels, Belgium

www.regions4.org

info@regions4.org

@Regions4SD

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