



University of Azuay

Faculty of Law

School of International Studies

PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION PROJECT BETWEEN
MUNICIPALITIES OF ARGENTAN AND
GUALAQUIZA CITIES TO ENHANCE
TOURIST SPACES IN GUALAQUIZA

Author:

María Emilia Samaniego Tello

Director:

Lcda. Gabriela Bonilla

Cuenca – Ecuador

2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
TABLE OF ANNEXES	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
RESUMEN	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Objectives	2
Theoretical framework	2
Literature review	5
METHODS	7
RESULTS	7
Cooperation project proposal	7
<i>Problem statement</i>	7
<i>Background and justification</i>	7
<i>Macro objective</i>	7
<i>Specific objectives</i>	7
<i>Description of the expected impact</i>	8
<i>Relationship to SDGs and Local Development Plans</i>	8
<i>Specific approach for action</i>	8
<i>Action plan</i>	9
<i>Financing budget</i>	9
<i>Search for and selection of contributor</i>	9
DISCUSSION	9
CONCLUSIONS	12
REFERENCES	12
ANNEXES	15

ANNEXES TABLE

Annex 1 Location of Morona Santiago and Gualaquiza.....	15
Annex 2 Information about native communities located in Gualaquiza.....	16
Annex 3 Expenses details	17

Proposal for an International Cooperation Project between Municipalities of Argentan and Gualaquiza Cities to Enhance Tourist Spaces in Gualaquiza

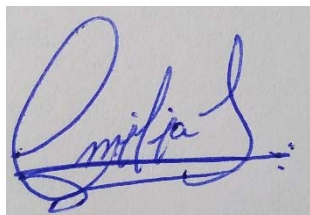
Abstract

The present paper presents a tourism project proposal financed through international cooperation between the DAG (Decentralized Autonomous Government) of Gualaquiza, Ecuador, and the DAG of Argentan, France. The research starts with a historical and general introduction to Gualaquiza, and shows its natural and cultural wealth. It then continues with a theoretical framework and general bibliographic review of international cooperation and the benefits of its application. This section also presents the specific place of action in which the project is developed and the reasons why it was chosen. In the discussion section, the proposal is analyzed as self-sustaining. Additionally, it explains the management of the incomes regarding international relations of the public sector based on testimonies from professionals related to the subject. It concludes with an explanation of the viability of the project and a recommendation for improving the management in the international relations area of the DAG.

Key words

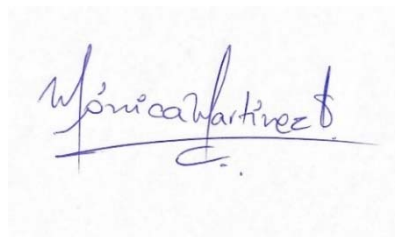
- Argentan, DAG, Gualaquiza, international cooperation, tourism.

Realizado por:



María Emilia Samaniego Tello

Aprobado por:



Lcda. Mónica Alexandra Martínez Sojos,
Mgst.
DIRECTORA

Propuesta de Proyecto de Cooperación Internacional entre el DAG de Argentan-Francia y el DAG Gualaquiza- Ecuador para la Potencialización de Espacios Turísticos en Gualaquiza

Resumen

En la siguiente investigación se presenta una propuesta de proyecto turístico con financiación obtenida a partir de cooperación internacional entre el DAG de Gualaquiza, Ecuador y el DAG de Argentan, Francia. Se inicia con una introducción histórica y general de Gualaquiza resaltando su riqueza natural y cultural. Se continúa con un marco teórico y revisión bibliográfica general de la cooperación internacional y sus beneficios a partir de una buena aplicación. En esta parte, también se da a conocer el espacio específico de acción sobre el que se desarrolla el proyecto y los motivos por lo que se lo eligió. En el apartado de discusión, se trata al proyecto como auto sustentable y también se presentan las falencias de gestión del sector público respecto a relaciones internacionales reflejadas en testimonios de profesionales conocedores del tema. Se concluye con una explicación sobre la viabilidad del proyecto y una recomendación para la mejora en la gestión en el área de relaciones internacionales del DAG.

Palabras clave

- Argentan, cooperación internacional, DAG, Gualaquiza, turismo.

Proposal for an International Cooperation Project between Municipalities of Argentan and Gualaquiza Cities to Enhance Tourist Spaces in Gualaquiza

INTRODUCTION

Ecuador is situated on the equatorial line, in South America, so its territory is located in both hemispheres. Its borders are to the north with Colombia; to the south and east with Peru; to the west with the Pacific Ocean. It is divided into four natural regions (Coast, Sierra, Amazon, Insular) and 24 provinces are distributed in these. Due to its geographical position, Ecuador has a great variety of flora and fauna, making it one of the most biodiverse countries in the world (UNDP, 2022). In addition, it has a very rich and attractive cultural heritage for other nations. This makes the country a global jewel, therefore, in a world where the conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage of the country gain more and more relevance and attention, Ecuador must seek ways to optimize these valuable resources in pursuit of achieving true local and national development.

Because of this, it is important to know a little more about the Amazon region. The geographical relief of the region is made up of a chain of elevations that are born in the eastern part of the Andes and descend to the plains of the Amazon. It extends over an area of 120,000 km², with abundant vegetation, and typical humid-tropical forests. The annual temperature ranges between 24 and 25 degrees Celsius (Embassy of Ecuador in the United States, 2022). The Amazonian environment, especially its tropical rainforest, contains the richest and most varied plant and animal environments in the world. Also, various ethnic groups have settled in this territory from which they have obtained ancestral knowledge of the natural resources of this region.

The ancient trees provide high-quality wood: cedar, laurel, tagua, and more varieties. Among the minerals that can be found, gold, silver, and oil abound. Medicinal plants are used by foreigners. The UN reports the marketing of pharmaceutical goods that could exceed six billion dollars annually. In addition, guayusa, ayahuasca, curare, or poison used in hunting, are the focus of study for scientists (Visita Ecuador, 2022). So many Amazonian treasures must be protected because the deforestation of Amazonian forests is an alarming sign. Climate activity helps the development of various plant and animal species, many endemics which are in danger due to excessive and inadequate population, habitat destruction, and exploitation of minerals that pollute the environment. Due to bad economic practices, the forests must be conserved to maintain a natural and human balance.

Gualaquiza is a canton in the south of Ecuador that belongs to the Province of Morona Santiago. This limits to the North with Canton San Juan Bosco which belongs to the same province; to the South, with Canton El Pangui, in the Province of Zamora Chinchipe; to the East, with the Republic of Peru; and to the west with the Province of Azuay (DAGMG, 2018). Within the Territorial Development Plans (PDOT) of Gualaquiza, a broad concept of protection, preservation, and conservation is maintained towards various heritage aspects around which different objectives are placed (DAGMG, 2019). In addition, it seeks to maintain fluid contact and participation with the native communities located in different parishes. It also has several of the Amazonian treasures mentioned above, so this will be the focus area for the development of this article.

With this in mind, the project seeks to maximize the value of natural resources through the practice of International Cooperation (IC). Gualaquiza, like the rest of the country, does not have the financial resources to carry out projects of any kind, so it is necessary to explore ways to obtain funds. IC is a practice that became relevant after World War II and has been adapted and perfected throughout history, showing positive results for the different actors. In addition, it is taken into account that the city is trying to promote this practice, so it has had previous contacts to act in different areas, but the results have not been representative (DAGMG, 2021). Consequently, the city is seeking to adapt and strengthen these relations, so the country of focus is France. There is a record of a donation made to Gualaquiza in the area of sports through cooperation talks with the city of Argentan-France. In addition, there is information on the interest that the city of Argentan has shown in continuing cooperation relations, so it is a great opportunity to improve the practice of cooperation and enhance the cultural heritage through tourism projects that could be proposed.

The Ecuadorian Amazon has always lagged in the international environment despite its natural and cultural wealth that could be exploited while preserving it through tourism. Currently, the canton of Gualaquiza, Morona Santiago, has limited tourist areas and some untapped. For example, there is the entire route belongs to the Kupiamais community, located in the Bomboiza parish (DAGMG, 2022). This route has a variety of waterfalls and a variety of flora and fauna. This route has not had a human intervention, so it is still difficult to access, but due to its potential, it could be adapted with minimal and eco-friendly invasion. So, knowing that the economic development points of the region are limited, we seek to offer an outlet through tourism and be part of the conservation and protection of their spaces and traditions, as it also has a variety of native communities that preserve their customs and development areas. Gualaquiza has native inhabitants belonging to the Shuara community and knowing that they have the original history of what is now the canton, it is important to preserve it so that it is not forgotten in time. In addition, this becomes an attraction for tourists at the same time that it generates economic affluence in the canton.

This area of the Amazon deserves international attention due to the different projects that can be carried out for the benefit of preservation and social action that correspond to the following Sustainable Development Goals mentioned by the UN: 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth; 15. Life on Land; 17. Partnerships for the Goals. Most projects developed through international cooperation have focused on the province of Pastaza, but the same potential, if not greater, can be found throughout the region but has not been properly promoted (DAGMP, 2020). On the other hand, providing intellectual assistance in the form of training focused on the tourism area and the support of economic resources would make Ecuador more attractive and conducive to visitors and residents from other countries. This is what an adequately developed and utilized IC is all about.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to carry out a historical and conceptual review of general aspects to understand theoretically and practically the concept of International Cooperation (IC). Secondly, the research will be carried out in-depth on the topic under discussion within the focus zone, Gualaquiza. The objective is to know the behavior of this area concerning IC and, in this way, to be able to identify the natural and tourist areas with development potential. Finally, a proposal for an IC project proposal is proposed to strengthen the identified areas with the objective to create new

Theoretical framework

The area of IC has been relegated to International Relations (IR), due to its emphasis on the study of the conflicts it has raised in the world. However, IC is equally important because it provides an alternative to the development of relations between the States of the International Community. In this sense, it is important to review the historical facts that have influenced IC, starting in 1945 after World War II, when this concept arose thanks to the birth of the United Nations and the commitment of the founding member to promote IC for the development and reduce inequality among States.

In the 1960s, two key elements marked the evolution of international cooperation: 1) the dissection of the world into the Western and Soviet poles; and, 2) the process of decolonization of the African continent (Socas and Hourcade 2009). This led to the emergence of Official Development Assistance, as a strategy of the world powers during the Cold War, to strengthen the lost ties with their former colonies. Likewise, Regional Banks were formed, and with them, the signing of economic integration agreements. The 1970s also felt the transformations undergone by international cooperation. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, of which Ecuador has been an active member since 1973, played an important role in the solution of the international oil price crisis. The world economic crises and the rise of dictators in Latin America generated political instability, which diversified International Cooperation and its actors.

In the 1980s, the IFIs (International Financial Institutions) were important actors in International Relations and International Cooperation. This institution supervised the formulation and implementation of the economic policies dictated by the Washington Consensus in countries in crisis due to the payment of foreign debt, especially in developing countries. However, International Cooperation underwent its greatest modification with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR in 1991 (Pereira Da Silva, 2001). In this context, geological interests changed and Western hegemony grew; the world adopted a liberal and open economic model, modifying the dynamics of the relationship between the different states of the world.

In a globalized and increasingly interconnected world, International Cooperation (IC) has become more relevant over the years, so international actors are seeking to carry out local projects that bring us closer to achieving sustainable development (Revees et al., 2018). But first, it is important to clearly understand the term cooperate.

First of all, the Royal Academy of the Spanish language defines the term "cooperate" as voluntary participation between parties with a common goal.

According to authors Duarte and Gonzáles (2014), there is a concept of international cooperation synthesized in some key factors: co-responsibility of the participants, a broad scale of respect, understanding of public and private actors, objectives and goals in similarity, the constant communication of the parties, and a null internal/external political intervention or participation of the actors.

According to authors Coppin and Gaitán (2014), international cooperation is an act of mutual benefit where countries grant part of their resources to external projects commonly linked to certain sectors that require development and financing.

According to Socas and Hourcade (2009), the following types of international cooperation are identified:

<p>CENTRALIZED</p> <p>It is carried out officially with nation-states or organizations belonging to them as actors.</p>	<p>Bilateral</p> <p>It refers to cooperation between two nation-states.</p>	<p>Vertical or North-South</p> <p>The donor is a developed country and the recipient is a developing country.</p>
		<p>Horizontally or South-South</p> <p>Both countries are in a state of development</p>
	<p>Triangular</p> <p>Two countries join forces to initiate cooperation with a third.</p>	
	<p>Multilateral</p> <p>The donor is an official international organization.</p>	
<p>DECENTRALIZED</p> <p>Involves development directly by entities or organizations. It is distinguished by its public or private nature.</p>	<p>Official or public</p> <p>Practiced by subnational public entities directly</p>	<p>Directly</p> <p>Direct relations between sectorial governments of other countries.</p>
		<p>Indirectly</p> <p>No direct relationship is established between actors.</p>
	<p>Unofficial</p>	

	Practiced by private non-profit organizations.	
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In this millennium, in less than two decades, there have been four events that have changed international cooperation in terms of its objectives and forms. In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration established the Millennium Development Goals, which were to be achieved by 2015 (United Nations, 1987). Within a year of the declaration, the World Trade Center in the United States was attacked by terrorists on September 11, leading to a rethinking of how the declaration implements its plans for assistance and cooperation by adopting the establishment of democracy around the world as the main focus of foreign policy. In 2008, the global financial crisis caused developed countries to reduce the amounts allocated to international assistance and cooperation that was focused on Africa and Asia. Since 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals served to shape and determine the global agenda of most countries belonging to the United Nations, which means a new uncertain stage in the history of International Cooperation, but gives hope for global change.

The final objective of international cooperation processes is to contribute to local or territorial development, which is understood by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as a process of the social construction of the general environment, driven by the interaction between geophysical characteristics, individual and collective initiatives of different actors, and the functioning of economic, technological, socio-political, cultural and environmental forces in the territory. From a national perspective, territorial development for Ecuador aims to strengthen the national structure of human settlements, articulated in a polycentric and complementary manner by the national plan for Good Living. In other words, it seeks those public services and development reach all territories of the country (Maldonado A. L., 2019).

Territorial Development is based on local reality, seeking the capacities that it has to undertake, innovate, solve, manage and articulate the problems that arise in the institutional context and the national, regional, or global scale market. IT also seeks to strengthen the capacities of the territory to use its resources and improve the quality of life of the community that inhabits it.

The 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, in a systematic way, says that sustainable development seeks an integral balance between economic, social, cultural, political, and ecological factors (Alvarez, 2016). Based on this approach, it is necessary to constructively articulate criteria that address development vertically, from top to bottom and vice versa, taking into account local and global aspects as these relate reciprocally. In this way, a broadening of the spatial and temporal horizon is proposed to adjust to the need for intergenerational and intragenerational equity.

The "locality" of sustainable development is understood when a local territory is responsible for assuming the management of sustainable development (García Jurado, 2004, pp. 1-5). This means that local sustainable development is managed by the local government or municipality of each canton, which is responsible for implementing programs and plans for a process of growth and structural change in the economy of a city, and the general development of its territory.

Focusing on a sustainable development model may be better than the traditional one, mainly because this sustainable "new model" leaves aside the traditional reductionist definition of development, which only focuses on economic improvement and a Keynesian stance that focuses on the increase of material resources. Capital is based on income or products per capita as an indicator of a country's development (Ortiz Motta and Arévalo Galindo 2009). Whereas sustainable development addresses environmental dimensions, social equity, and poverty eradication, along with the increase and improvement of a given country's economy.

Therefore, sustainable development is against the indiscriminate use of resources (proposed by the traditional model) and seeks rational and conscious management of them, to meet current needs without compromising the ability to solve future ones, and thus obtain optimal management of them. Natural resources, maintain balance and a dignified condition for the development of the local territory and the human being himself (Vázquez, 2006).

Finally, one of the study approaches of this article is the protection of Cultural Heritage, so it is necessary to understand what this practice refers to. Cultural heritage refers to those tangible and intangible assets that have been passed from generation to generation as knowledge of their origin and seek to be protected to avoid oblivion and loss of their roots (UNESCO, 2021). This includes more aspects than just monuments or objects. It also seeks the conservation and preservation of traditions, rituals, languages, writings, customs, and other historical expressions. The roots of a community are sustained by cultural heritage; therefore, all humanity

has a history on which its identity is developed and through which its future is built (OSTELEA, 2021). Given this, there is no greater reason for its protection than the birth of the human being.

As the concept of heritage deepens, the complexity behind the term increases; although its emergence arises in connection with nationalist sentiment, its interpretation also develops over time, so that it acquires new connotations, so it is considered before as a consumer good, instead of prioritizing the representation of identity (UNDP, 2022). The advantages that heritage means for the tourist company related to leisure and, this in itself to triviality, supposes monetary enrichment for many societies coated with the apparent intellectual enrichment offered by the history and development processes of heritage.

However, this economic situation, in spite of seeming unconnected or prioritized compared to the meaning of identity preservation, should not be demonized, since it is the result of good practices that integrate the diversity that characterizes the globalized world in which we find ourselves today. It is clear that the economic vision must be balanced with the protection of these assets, because it can degenerate into an indiscriminate and inadequate exploitation of them, or, otherwise, the history that harbors diverse heritages would be forgotten and would be absorbed by globality.

Literature review

It is necessary to contextualize the canton of Gualaquiza as a protector of cultural and natural heritage to understand the focus of the study. Gualaquiza is a canton in southern Ecuador belonging to the Province of Morona Santiago. It is bordered to the north by the San Juan Bosco canton belonging to the same province; to the south by the El Panguí canton, belonging to the province of Zamora Chinchipe; to the east by the Republic of Peru; and to the west by the province of Azuay.

It has an area of 2151.29 km², representing 8.94% of the total area of Morona Santiago. It has a population of 20.000 inhabitants approximately. It is made up of ten parishes: Gualaquiza, Mercedes Molina Sevilla, Bomboiza, Nueva Tarqui, El Rosario Aguacate, San Miguel Cuyes, Chigüinda, Amazonas, Bermejos, El Ideal (DAGMG, 2018). These locations can be identified in annex 1. For a clearer location, Gualaquiza is 180 km from Loja, 146 km from Cuenca and 217 km from the city of Macas (DAG, 2022). One of its major limitations is access roads. Although several efforts have been made to rehabilitate and improve the roads, they are still in poor condition, which is a determining factor when visiting the area.

Among the most attractive natural areas in Gualaquiza are fantastic waterfalls such as La Dolorosa, Culebrillas and La Sagrada. Also worth mentioning are the El Paraíso Ecological Reserve; the caves of La Dolorosa (with attractive formations); the Callejón del Empalme; and the Cuyes, Cuchipampa and Zamora rivers, with their picturesque beaches (Ministerio de Turismo, 2020). In addition, given its proximity to the Andes, the canton has a distinctive and diverse gastronomy. It has traditional highland dishes such as guinea pig and roasts accompanied by side dishes such as potatoes and mote. On the other hand, for the extravagant fans of culinary experiences, there are typical options from the Amazonian East such as frog legs, ayampacos, chontacuros and chicha, all prepared with local products.

Additionally, according to the DAG (2022), in the Alley and Petroglyphs of El Empalme, you can go rope descents, swimming, hiking, flora and fauna observation, photography, and cane juice tasting. In addition, you can appreciate three large rocks, where in two of them you can see drawings, strange figures of animals and human faces. You can also appreciate the abundant flora and exotic fauna of the Runahurco Ecological Conservation Area, an area that covers an area of 87,975.65 hectares and covers, for the most part, ecosystems considered sensitive such as: moorlands, montane and piedmont forests of the territories of rural parishes of: Amazonas, Bermejos, Nueva Tarqui, Bomboiza, Chiguinda, El Rosario, San Miguel de Cuyes, El Ideal and the urban parish of Gualaquiza.

This area invites visitors to discover its spaces by hiking and speleology using only a flashlight and a helmet in the Dolorosa Caves. This is constituted by a small waterfall of approximately 20 meters high, which forms a lagoon of approximately 6 meters wide. Here it is possible to enter and take a bath. Once you reach the sector, a 45-minute walk begins that leads to the cavern through a properly defined and signposted path. The "Playas del Ideal" with crystal clear waters, provide perfect places to share with friends and family, either hiking or camping. It is located 15 minutes by car from the center of the city of Gualaquiza. It is one of the best river beaches in southern Ecuador with about 10 square meters of white sand where visitors sunbathe and practice sports on the shore. Another striking activity is to admire the archeology in the Remanso Complex, where you can live with the Shuar communities in Kayamas and live the adrenaline with the practice of rafting on the Cuyes River. This area has human and cultural attractions of great interest such as the traditions of the Shuar people,

including ancestral medicine, music, dances, and handicrafts such as weavings, crowns, pendants, bracelets, spears, arrows, and knives.

Gualaquiza's hydrography includes watersheds that originate from branches of the Cordilleras Oriental and El Cóndor, giving rise to sites of great natural relevance and whose waters generously supply the canton's population (DAG, 2022). These watersheds are known as: Zamora River, with the Chuchumbletza, Bomboiza and Kalaglás rivers as tributaries; Bomboiza River, main tributary of the Zamora, the same one formed by the union of the Cuyes and Cuchipamba rivers and has the Gualaquiza and Kupiambritza rivers as tributaries; Chuchumbletza River, which serves to identify the border with the province of Zamora Chinchipe; and the Cenepa River, which, like the Coangos, originates in the foothills of the Cordillera del Cóndor. These areas are ideal for various sports such as kayaking, rafting, tubing, trekking and bird watching.

The canton's climate has been subdivided into two bioclimatic zones: the humid subtropical region, characterized by an average temperature that ranges between 18°C and 24°C per year, with an average annual rainfall of between 1500 and 2000 mm of rain; and the temperate rainy region, with an average temperature ranging from 12°C to 18°C and an average annual rainfall of between 2000 and 3000 mm. On the other hand, 55% of Gualaquicense's territory is covered by vegetation, made up of 10% primary forest, 35% secondary forest and 10% high altitude shrub forest. Thirty percent of the area is occupied by pastureland used for livestock, an activity to which a large part of the population is dedicated (DAG, 2022).

According to the DAG (2022), in recent years, new private areas have been developed that have led to an increase in domestic and foreign tourists to visit this canton. Among the most striking places we can mention:

- The Botanical Garden "El Gato": It is located 5 minutes from downtown. This is a reforestation project that began almost 20 years ago and aims to conserve the native flora and fauna of the Amazon.
- La Casa del Arbol de Don Pedro: This project will start at the end of 2019. It offers adequate infrastructure with all the basic services, a viewpoint on the third floor and two rooms to enjoy a pleasant experience in nature. It also offers the service of typical food of the area.
- Ecolodge Río & Vida: This is a lodging place with ample and luxurious facilities that allow a rest away from the city and in contact with nature due to its location 40 minutes away from the center of the city.

On the other hand, having a public sector planning regarding cultural management is vital, hence, within the Territorial Development Plans (PDOT) of Gualaquiza, a broad concept of protection, preservation and conservation is maintained towards various heritage aspects around which different objectives are placed (DAGMG, 2019). In addition, it seeks to maintain fluid contact and participation with the native communities located in the different rural parishes. For details about native communities, refer to annex number 2. In this way, it will be possible to support with a previously structured agenda of tasks and objectives aimed at the preservation, protection, dissemination and development of cultural heritage and culture in general. This generates the need for professionals specialized in cultural management for a correct connection of the parties.

The protection of cultural heritage is much more than the restoration and exhibition of objects, or the recovery of cultural manifestations. It is mainly about strengthening people's relationship with these objects and, even more, with the manifestations of intangible heritage, since this heritage is the most important element in the activation of the identity of peoples. Strategies for the safeguarding of the latter aim at strengthening the participation of communities, groups and individuals in the processes, generating awareness, exploration, transmission, training, promotion and recognition of the intangible cultural heritage and integrating this practice into national and local planning.

Most of the native communities are located in the parish of Bomboiza, and three of them are in the neighboring parish of Mercedes Molina. Taking this into account, the area that is considered the most complete with tourism and ancestral components for the development of the tourism project proposal belongs to the second one, and, despite having the least number of communities, it has an area already considered as a tourist attraction for different extreme sports (DAG 2022).

The relationship between cultural heritage and tourism is indisputable and inescapable, due to the fact that human beings, since their creation, have been developing tangible and intangible evidence that forms the historical context on which humanity originates. Because of this, several of these attractions have become an investment for the economic sector, resulting in tourism. Cultural heritage allows the construction of common meeting spaces that strengthen the identity of a society, plurality, plurinational and intercultural. For Gualaquiza, the main place of interest is the Kupiambritza Waterfall. This waterfall was worshiped by the native elders for its

healing waters blessed by the god Arutam, which is formed at the foot of the slope, starting from a very attractive pond and stream. But it is said that the rituals and spiritual information about these waters have been lost with time due to the lack of interest of the new generations to maintain the ancestral customs of the community. On the other hand, there is also a variety of flora and fauna endemic to the region, in addition to some areas frequented by tourists for extreme sports.

METHODS

The following steps were followed based on the methodological model of Heiko Koziolk (2008) taking the specific objectives of the research as the questions to be answered throughout the article:

To learn about international cooperation processes, a literature review of secondary sources was conducted. The study of Canton Gualaquiza was conducted through a literature review of secondary sources obtained from the DAG of the city of Gualaquiza, articles, news, research papers found in digital libraries, and pages promoting tourism in Ecuador. This research was complemented with a semi-structured interview with Architect Elizabeth Tenesaca, Cooperation Analyst of the municipality of Gualaquiza.

Subsequently, a study of Argentan's international cooperation interests in France was carried out through a bibliographic review of official sources of the DAG and the Government of France.

Once all this information was collected, an analysis of Argentan's interests and Gualaquiza's resources was carried out to identify areas of cooperation and propose a viable project idea between these two international actors.

RESULTS

Cooperation project proposal

1. Problem statement

The Mercedes Molina parish in the Gualaquiza canton has wonderful natural spaces and a great tourist wealth with great potential, to become tourist area. Despite being areas considered attractive to visit, they do not have adequate infrastructure that allows a pleasant and easily accessible tour, so we have considered the possibility of converting these areas into tourist sites in a minimally invasive way generating sources of employment for members of the Kupiamais community since the project will be generated in their territory.

2. Background and justification

It is known that the ancestral medicine and the spaces for the practice of extreme sports are an attraction for foreigners and nationals who visit the area and that the native communities, experts in these topics, have taken it upon themselves to make these aspects of their culture known to visitors. To promote these natural spaces as tourist sites, in addition to preserving and disseminating the cultural knowledge of the indigenous communities, we intend to work together with the Kupiamais community of the Gualaquiza canton, in the adaptation and creation of tourist spaces around the Kupiambrizta Waterfall.

3. Macro objective

Guarantee economic development opportunities in the Kupiamais community, supporting micro-enterprises aimed at promoting culture, gastronomy, and scenic beauty through rural community tourism thus maximizing, the income opportunity and promoting the canton Gualaquiza as a tourist power in the country.

4. Specific objectives

- Adapt the trails of the Waterfall Kupiambrizta for tourism.
- Adapt spaces for the appreciation of cultural acts and commercialization of objects and traditional food of the community.

- Train community members in the administration and management of tourist spaces.

5. *Description of the expected impact*

The expected impact is concentrated on the benefits perceived by the Kupiamais community directly, as they are the main participants and administrators of the proposed tourist spaces. In addition, as indirect beneficiaries of the canton, there are already existing local food, hotel, transportation, and other businesses, due to the significant increase in the influx of tourists within the canton.

6. *Relationship to SDGs and Local Development Plans*

The project relates to three of the SDGs proposed by the UN, which are:

- 8. Decent work and economic growth
- 15. Life on Land
- 17. Partnerships for the Goals

On the other hand, the project is also linked to the following objectives of the National Development Plan 2021-2025 proposed by ECLAC:

Economic Axis

- Objective 1: Increase and promote, in an inclusive manner, employment opportunities and working conditions.
- Objective 2: Promote an economic system with clear rules that fosters foreign trade, tourism, investment attraction, and modernization of the national financial system.
- Objective 4: Guarantee the management of public finances sustainably and transparently.

Social Axis

- Objective 8: Generate new opportunities and well-being for rural areas, with emphasis on peoples and nationalities.

Integral Security Axis

- Objective 11: Conserve, restore, protect and make sustainable use of natural resources.

Institutional Axis

- Objective 15: Promote public ethics, transparency, and the fight against corruption.

In addition, within the Ordinance to preserve, maintain and disseminate the architectural, cultural, and natural heritage of the canton and build public spaces for these purposes in the jurisdiction of the canton Gualaquiza, it has the:

Art. 80.- Resources. - The Fund for the Preservation and Maintenance of the Cultural Heritage of Gualaquiza shall be constituted with economic resources from the municipality itself and resources from public or private institutions of a national, regional, or provincial nature, international cooperation, as well as from natural persons.

7. *Specific approach for action*

The project will focus specifically on the Kupiambritza Waterfall due to its tourism potential. The action plan focuses on the minimally invasive restructuring of the mentioned area having as administrators and

beneficiaries directly the native Kupiamais community members that will provide a specialized tourist service to the visitors. In this way, self-sufficiency is expected for those involved and a reactivation of the city in general.

8. *Action plan*

To achieve the proposed objectives, the following plan will be followed:

1. For the design and adequacy of the trail around the waterfall, architects and civil engineers should be hired.
2. For the adequacy and construction of spaces for the appreciation of cultural events and commercialization of objects and traditional food of the community, the same architects and engineers will continue to be hired.
3. For the training of community members in the administration and management of tourist spaces, we will hire tourism graduates, financial administrators, and international relations graduates.

9. *Financing budget*

The general estimated budget for the development of the project is \$162,800. This cost includes expenses for the mobilization of project leaders to the city of Gualaquiza and per diem expenses. In addition, the cost of the facilities where the necessary training will be held is also taken into account. Advertising and infrastructure improvements are also considered at the same cost. For more details on expenses, please refer to annex number 3.

10. *Search for and selection of contributor*

Knowing the objective of the project and the impact that is expected to be achieved, an analysis has been made of the community and the DAG of Gualaquiza, and a lack of economic resources for the development of the project has been identified. For this reason, it has been decided to look for a collaborator through international cooperation for the necessary financing. Consequently, a contributor has been selected that has shown interest in the subject of the project and, in addition, similar cases in which this actor has contributed have been considered to ensure a possibility of participation on its part. This stakeholder is the municipality of Argentan, France.

According to the atlas of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, results were obtained from the cooperation projects carried out by Argentan. These were based on twinning and are still ongoing in the areas of culture and heritage with the sub-themes of infrastructure, equipment, and cultural events. The cooperation has taken place with municipalities in Hungary, the United Kingdom, and Germany, so now it seeks to diversify the localities with Latin countries to have a broader exchange in the same areas of interest following the example of neighboring municipalities, such as Villers-sur-Mer and its cooperation with the Municipality of Concordia (Cancilleria Argentina, 2013), within the same cultural areas.

Consequently, it is taken as a potential contributor to the axes proposed by Gualaquiza, considering also, the approaches and the visit given in 2020, where the same areas have been discussed for possible projects. Elizabeth Tenesaca, Cooperation Analyst of the DAG of Gualaquiza, the interest shown by the representatives in charge of international cooperation in Argentan regarding the importance of the conservation of the Shuar culture due to the threat posed by mining in the Amazon area today and the importance of generating new sources of income.

Although the income generated by sustainable and environmentally friendly sources, such as this proposal, does not compare to the profitability provided by mining, it serves as an impetus for the controlled and well-used exploitation of other natural areas, so that this project could be replicated in other places contributing to their recognition as new tourist attractions in the country. It is expected that this will increase tourism revenues and will be comparable to mining profits. On the other hand, the previous study is considered within the legal framework managed by the municipality of Argentan, which is closely related to the competencies and project proposals of the municipality of Gualaquiza, so there is no major barrier to continue with the relationship.

DISCUSSION

Given the type of research conducted and the time required to develop a project model, important economic factors that are not evident in this article, due to the time restrictions that were given for its development, have to be considered. These factors are: measurable objectives, expected income projections, and a detailed budget. For the collection of these data, a deeper field investigation within the canton and the community is required, since the information must be real and accurate. In addition, this type of data is required for the donor to ensure the proper use of the funds to be donated and the areas or goods in which they can be justified.

Society has to be the main protector of cultural heritage, therefore, raising awareness among the younger generations is an essential part of the protection and conservation of a territory's heritage. Conventional education should include information about heritage, making it clear that its concept refers to the heritage that is part of our identity and that, moderately exploited, it can become an economic engine for its territory, as an example we can consider the proposal of the tourism project presented in this article. Consequently, as part of this commitment, public agencies should encourage the training of specialized personnel focused on the preservation, conservation, dissemination and protection of cultural property, increasing the participation of professionals related to history, architecture, archeology and paleontology, allowing an optimal management of cultural heritage belonging to an area.

Based on the information obtained and proposed, it was possible to demonstrate the tourism potential of the Gualaquiza canton and, through the project proposal developed, a new mechanism for attracting national and foreign tourists was unveiled, with the intention of trying to conserve and enhance these resources so that they become a real source of income for the inhabitants of the canton and, directly, for the community in question. The economic resources available to the DAG and that can be allocated to tourism are insufficient and therefore all efforts to make Gualaquiza an ecotourism canton are delayed. These and many other reasons justify the efforts to look for strategies and contributors interested in environmental conservation, ecotourism, and the conservation of millenary cultures as a development opportunity for the people of Gualaquiza.

For the proposed project to work, it is necessary to analyze and even foresee the response and willingness to collaborate that these actors will have since the development and success of the project will depend on this. The first stakeholders to be directly involved are the members of the Kupiamais community. According to DAG reports, this community has been involved in other projects proposed by the municipality and has contributed to the activities. In addition, taking into account that they will be the direct beneficiaries of the project results, it is considered that these stakeholders will be coincidental, i.e., they will be stakeholders who will respond positively and contribute to the project.

On the other hand, environmental groups are considered as possible opponents of the project, and what is proposed to obtain their support and diffusion of the tourist space, is the presentation of plans with little invasive infrastructure, a greater budget for conservation based on the results of the project and the already existing affluence of tourists that have not intervened in the nature of the area. In addition, leaders of the community in question and of the DAG itself are considered indifferent, but decentralization of the administration of the area is expected so that their approval for different activities is not required.

Another fundamental factor in achieving the expected results of an international cooperation project, which in this case is the creation of jobs and permanent sources of income for the Kupiamais community, as well as adequate tourist areas, and that these also represent economic income for the entire canton, is to ensure that the projects do not depend on international funding to keep them going. This international aid will only be the first impulse for a self-sustaining source of income, but not the only basis for its continuation.

What is sought through development projects is a solution to a problem in a sustainable manner over time, and not only temporarily. Thus, this project will fulfill the objective of future self-sustainability based on the training that will be implemented to the people of the community so that they can develop themselves over time in the area that will be adapted as a tourist place. The people of the communities that have already been trained can provide training to new people to have more personnel in the businesses or services that will be offered. In this way, generating more attractive spaces for outsiders and thus obtaining permanent income from the tourism sector. With this, the control and administration of the tourist area will fall solely on the community itself, with minimal supervision, as a way of empowerment for the population.

This research has the objective to get the participation of the city of Argentan in France for international cooperation contributor, it is also important to keep in mind other potential contributors that may be interested in

the same area. The following options were also considered, the Caisse Centrale de la France Libre (Central Fund of Free France), created in 1941, and L'Agence Française de Développement (AFD, French Development Agency). Its objective is to finance, accompany and accelerate transitions toward a fairer and more sustainable world (AFD, 2022). Its approaches are based on universal values of solidarity, social justice, democracy, gender equality, the fight against inequality, climate change, biodiversity, peace, education, urbanism, health, governance, and other axes related to the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, it seeks to adapt to and drive the evolutions in the world promoted by France.

Since 2010, AFD has also been working with the Latin America Investment Facility (LAIF), a regional organization created by the European Union as financial organization of sustainable development projects (LAIF, 2022). It promotes the movement of funds from European and regional financial institutions, governments, and the private sector to carry out sustainable development projects in Latin America. AFD is considered as a possible option if Argentan's DAG support is not obtained, although it is also considered if the amount covered by Argentan is not the total amount required for the project, but only part of it, which would require a third cooperating partner for project implementation.

Another important factor to consider is the experience in international relations and international cooperation that the canton of Gualaquiza has, due to the need for trained personnel in the area to guarantee the success of the conversations. It was found that the canton maintains cooperative relations with DAGs from other cities and cantons, mostly at the educational, sports, social, and other levels. But the same cannot be said for the international aspect. This is due to the fact that there are few cases in which there have been projects of this nature and related to humanitarian aid and infrastructure.

According to the President of the parish of Bomboiza, Mrs. Janet Awananch, there has been contacting with the Japanese Embassy for economic support for the construction of infrastructure (bridges). This deal was successful, but she mentions that she has not been able to get support for other aspects of need. On the other hand, the President of the parish of Bermejos, Mr. Raul Sarmiento, mentions that an attempt was made to maintain a cooperative relationship with the Non-Governmental Organization Manos Unidas dedicated to aspects of the development of underdeveloped countries, but the project could not materialize due to a lack of necessary management on the part of the DAG. Also, the Chief of the Gualaquiza Fire Department, Lieutenant Colonel Toño Quezada Galindo, reports that since 2009-2010 they have been working on aspects of international cooperation with firefighters from the United States, Mexico, Colombia, and independent foundations. He also comments that all the contacts generated have been made independently as an organization.

On the other hand, one of the canton's entrepreneurs, Mr. Jorge Avila, with his business in the city of Gualaquiza, mentions that he is aware of a sports cooperation relationship with a U.S. non-profit organization. This organization contributed with soccer teams in the parish of Bomboiza to achieve the inclusion of women in this sport in 2020. He also commented that contacts are being maintained to manage the financing of a coach specialized in the practice of this sport with women, which would be covered by the organization for the benefit of the parish in question.

Finally, the Tourism Promoter of the municipality, Engineer Alex Carchipulla, mentions that he does not know about cooperation projects in the tourism area and also says that the funds managed by the municipality are rarely invested in the tourism area because they are few and are directed to other areas consider of priority attention. Although Gualaquiza's development plans seek to maintain a well-structured agenda and the active participation of public institutions, another element is essential: financing. This type of management must be accompanied by the representative allocation of economic resources that should not be considered as an expense, but as an investment for social benefit. Hence, the public budget for the tourism sector should not be omitted. The funds allocated, although they cannot be compared to what is designated to the health or education sector, should be sufficient for the adequate management of patrimonies in relation to tourism.

Additionally, the behavior and experience of the public sector in Gualaquiza concerning to international relations should be taken into account. In the canton, there is no inter-institutional articulation and coordination with the plurality of existing actors in the framework of International Cooperation (IC), which should be considered for the proper functioning of a cooperation department (Ortiz Motta and Arévalo Galindo 2009). Currently, there is an inadequate and limited approach to what IC means for Gualaquiza, due to the fact that its success is measured in base to the amount of money that could be received through cooperation processes without taking into account the results or fruits of the cooperation, nor the establishment of long-term relationships

(Correa, 2017). Likewise, in the Development and Land Management Plans (PDOT) of the canton, which delimit actions to achieve development, the IC has not been included in any way as a precursor tool for development opportunities despite this is a great source of resources within international relations (DAGMG, 2020).

What is recommended, based on this panorama, is the hiring of specialized people on the subject to improve the management of the resources obtained and greater capture of them, but with the objective of directing them appropriately to sustainable projects over time. Thus, the projects executed by the cooperation area will have better results and, in the future, those will increase. In this way, the proposed project will also be successful, and several aspects of international relations that are already managed in the canton, but not professionally, will be taken advantage of.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the study, it was possible to describe in detail general concepts of the IC for the follow-up of a referential thread in the area of focus. It was also possible to point out general aspects of the canton of Gualaquiza and its important areas of potential tourist exploitation. On the other hand, information was obtained on the behavior of cooperation in the area and its participation, as well as the development of the various native communities that are part of the canton.

Within the latter, the organization that has made the most effort to obtain resources and support through the CI has been the Fire Department. It has been independently involved in different cooperation activities, which has resulted in obtaining various internationally recognized equipment and training for service optimization. However, taking into account that the focus of the research is based on the tourism resource and public management, no good results were obtained. The tourism promoter of the municipality comments that there has been no funding for projects aimed at the sector, nor have there been any efforts independent of the sector, because these places are under municipal administration.

In addition, from data collected by the DAG regarding the native communities belonging to Gualaquiza, it was found that the best area to be included in the project proposal is the one belonging to the parish of Mercedes Molina, specifically, where the Kupiamais community is located. This area was considered as the focus zone because of its ample tourist potential with its Waterfall Kupiambritza known for its curative properties and the natural attraction that adorns the stream. The current influx of tourists already visiting the area for different purposes was also considered.

Special attention was given to the administrative model of native communities because one of the objectives of the research is to promote the tourist sites of the canton through CI, but with their broad and voluntary participation, in order to achieve a positive economic development in these areas. In addition, from the results obtained from the economic behavior of the communities, it was found that they do not take advantage of these areas as a source of income, since they have a great influx of visitors.

Additionally, the bibliography was reviewed regarding the interest shown by France to participate in cooperation projects with Ecuador, which indicates that the city in question, Argentan, becomes a potential target to carry out the proposal. Its main topics of interest have been related to the tourism sector, so that the country can strengthen these attributes considered of important attention by France.

Finally, for the results section, the previous research was used for the development of a cooperation project proposal as a viable application option, considering the tourism potential of the area in question and also indicating how its self-sustainability is expected as a way of independence from social aid. In addition, for the discussion part, there is an analysis of the current management of cooperation in the public area, which reflected several shortcomings, so it was recommended an investment in international relations specialized personnel to improve it.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Figure 1

Location of Morona Santiago and Gualaquiza



Source: DAG Municipality of Gualaquiza (2022)

Annex 2: Table 1.

Information about native communities located in Gualaquiza

NOMBRE DE LA COMUNIDAD	UBICACIÓN/P ARROQUIA	ORGANIZACIÓN POLÍTICA	PARTICIPACIÓN/ACTIVIDAD ECONÓMICA DENTRO DEL CANTÓN	PARTICIPACIÓN EN CUALQUIER TIPO DE PROYECTOS PÚBLICOS
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<i>YUKUTAIS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA/GANADERA	AVICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN VICENTE DE YUKUTAIS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>PIUNTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>AYANTAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>KAMPANAK EN TSA</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>JAIME NARVÁEZ</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>CONDOR</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>CHUMPIAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN PEDRO DE CHUMPIAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>NAPURAK</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>NAPINTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>KUNCHAIM</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>KAYANTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>FELIX CHUIM</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>SAN PEDRO DE CHATUS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>VALLE HERMOSO</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>TSARUNTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>PUMPUIS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>NAICHAP</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>LOS ÁNGELES</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>LA PAZ</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>CASCADA</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>NAYANMAK</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN ANTONIO PUMPUIS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN MIGUEL PUMPUIS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>KAYAMAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SUKANAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN JUAN DE KAYAMAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN AGUSTÍN DE KAYAMAS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN VICENTE DE YAWINTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SAN LUIS DE YAWINTS</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	AGRICULTURA-DAG BOMBOIZA
<i>SASAPAS</i>	MERCEDES MOLINA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	PISCICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>YANTSAS</i>	MERCEDES MOLINA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	PISCICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>TINK</i>	BOMBOIZA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	PISCICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO
<i>KUPIAMAS</i>	MERCEDES MOLINA	SÍNDICA	PRODUCCIÓN AGRÍCOLA	PISCICULTURA-DAG PROV. MORONA SANTIAGO

Source: DAG Municipality of Gualaquiza (2022)

Annex 3: Table 2.

Expenses details

Plan de acción	Actividad	Valor aproximado en \$
Socializar a profundidad el proyecto con los diferentes grupos.	Transporte, alojamiento y alimentación para las dirigentes del proyecto.	800
Instalación de la sede del proyecto a mantenerse para capacitaciones.	Gastos en mantenimiento, sillas, mesas, computadoras, pizarras.	2000
Difusión de los atractivos turísticos naturales.	Publicidad.	10000
Mejoras y adecuaciones en el acceso a la Cascada Kupiambritza.	Contratación de arquitectos e ingenieros, materiales de construcción para el sendero.	100000
Adecuaciones de espacios a lo largo del paseo para poder apreciarse diferentes actividades tradicionales realizadas por nativos	Contratación de arquitectos e ingenieros, materiales de construcción para cabañas.	50000
TOTAL		162.800

Source: Own elaboration with Gualaquiza DAG information (June 2022).