



University of Azuay

Faculty of Legal Sciences

School of International Studies

**Social Responsibility and Its Contribution to
Sustainable Development in Cuenca**

Case study: ICLEI

Author:

Kiaved Paulina Orellana Salazar

Thesis Director

Bernardita Quintanilla Gonzalez

Cuenca – Ecuador

2024

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my entire family. First of all, I would like to thank my mom, who knew how to support me and guide me with her best advice throughout this academic process; my dad, who with his good humor knew how to bring a smile to my face when I needed it most; and my brother Juan Fer, who despite the distance of kilometers between the two of us, has always been there to listen to my college anecdotes and joke about them.

Every word written in these pages demonstrates the infinite faith they have had in me and their constant sacrifice to ensure my success. Without their love and unwavering confidence in my abilities, this achievement would not have been possible.

THANK YOU

I would like to thank Professor Bernardita Quintanilla who in addition to directing my degree work has also become a friend and an excellent mentor for me.

I thank my parents and my brother for their tireless emotional and financial support that has been the lighthouse that has guided me throughout this process and my friends Joaqui, Paulita, and Majo who have been a fundamental part during these years of study, who despite our “departures” have always been there to support me in the most difficult moments. I am grateful for every moment shared, every laugh, and every friendship forged during our academic process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
THANK YOU	ii
INDEX OF TABLES AND APPENDICES	iv
Index of Tables.....	iv
Index of Appendices	iv
Resumen	v
Abstract	v
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Objectives.....	1
1.2 Theoretical Framework	1
2. Methods.....	5
3. Results	7
3.1 Documentary analysis:	7
3.2 Semi-structured interview	9
4. Discussion	10
Social Responsibility.....	10
5. Conclusion.....	12
6. References	13

INDEX OF TABLES AND APPENDICES

Index of Tables

Table 1 <i>Analysis categories matrix</i>	6
Table 2 <i>Documental analysis matrix</i>	8

Index of Appendices

Appendix 1 <i>Interview matrix</i>	15
Appendix 2 <i>Matrix of category analysis applied to interviews</i>	18

Resumen

La responsabilidad social en Cuenca ha sido un motor clave para el desarrollo sostenible, integrando a diversas instituciones en proyectos que buscan mejorar la calidad de vida de los ciudadanos. La colaboración entre la Municipalidad de Cuenca e ICLEI ha permitido implementar programas como "Safe and Sound Cities", que no solo promueven la sostenibilidad ambiental, sino también la inclusión social y el desarrollo económico. Estos proyectos destacan por su enfoque integrador, involucrando tanto a entidades públicas como privadas en un esfuerzo conjunto para alcanzar objetivos comunes, tales como la reducción de emisiones de carbono y la creación de empleos verdes. El análisis de la cooperación interinstitucional en Cuenca revela que las alianzas estratégicas son fundamentales para el éxito de iniciativas sostenibles. Sin embargo, también se identifican desafíos significativos, como la burocracia y la falta de recursos, que pueden dificultar la implementación efectiva de estos proyectos. A pesar de estos obstáculos, la experiencia de Cuenca demuestra que una gestión responsable y colaborativa puede generar resultados positivos, sentando un precedente valioso para otras ciudades con desafíos similares. Es crucial fortalecer estos vínculos y fomentar la participación de diversos sectores para asegurar la continuidad y el impacto de las prácticas de responsabilidad social y desarrollo sostenible.

Palabras Clave: Responsabilidad Social, Desarrollo Sostenible, Cooperación Interinstitucional, Alianzas, ICLEI

Abstract

Social responsibility in Cuenca has been a key driver for sustainable development, integrating various institutions in projects that seek to improve the quality of life of citizens. The collaboration between the Municipality of Cuenca and ICLEI has allowed the implementation of programs and "Safe and Sound Cities", which not only promote environmental sustainability but also social inclusion and economic development. These projects stand out for their integrative approach, involving both public and private entities in a joint effort to achieve common goals, such as reducing carbon emissions and creating green jobs. The analysis of inter-institutional cooperation in Cuenca reveals that strategic alliances are fundamental to the success of sustainable initiatives. However, significant challenges are also identified, such as bureaucracy and lack of resources, which can hinder the effective implementation of these projects. Despite these obstacles, Cuenca's experience demonstrates that responsible and collaborative management can generate positive results, setting a valuable precedent for other cities with similar challenges. It is crucial to strengthen these linkages and encourage the participation of various sectors to ensure the continuity and impact of social responsibility and sustainable development practices.

Keywords: Social Responsibility, Sustainable development, Inter- institutional Cooperation, Alliances, ICLEI

Social Responsibility and its Contribution to Sustainable Development in Cuenca

Case study: ICLEI

1. Introduction

Cuenca throughout the years has made great progress in sustainable development and social responsibility. The city has adopted different policies and programs that promote sustainable development, while local businesses are increasingly committed to social responsibility, without neglecting inter-institutional cooperation, which has been the key to progress in these two areas.

Inter-institutional cooperation in Cuenca has allowed institutions to work together in order to achieve the proposed objectives, for example: improving the quality of life of citizens, and promoting economic development and environmental protection (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023).

The progress of this cooperation has been reflected in different projects that have demonstrated the commitment and responsibility for sustainable development and the welfare of its citizens. Among the most outstanding are: "Cuenca Green City" project; "Cuenca Smart City" and "Cuenca Inclusive City" (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023).

It should be noted that the characteristic of these projects is the broad participation of institutions, organizations, and public-private entities, among others, whose contribution has been significant to enhancing and strengthening sustainable development and social responsibility in the city.

It is worth mentioning that inter-institutional cooperation and responsible management have contributed significantly at national and international level, such is the case of the project "Promotion of Sustainable Investment in Ecuador" created in 2019 and led by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), whose main objective was to promote sustainable investment in Ecuador through the development of an institutional framework (Observatorio Regional de Planificación para el Desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe, 2017).

Another example is the "Sustainable Cities of Latin America and the Caribbean" project, which was approved in 2022. Its main objective was based on supporting local governments in Latin America and the Caribbean in the implementation of sustainable urban development plans. This project has supported several municipalities in Ecuador in the development of sustainable development plans, obtaining very satisfactory results within the country (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2022).

Based on this background, it is necessary to identify the need to understand how social responsibility practices, in collaboration with an organization such as ICLEI, can contribute to sustainable development in the pursuit of community well-being, good natural resource management, and urban resilience. From this, it will be possible to promote and potentially replicate an inter-agency management model based on social responsibility for sustainability in other communities with similar challenges.

1.1 Objectives

The general objective of this research is to identify the implementation of social responsibility practices, focusing on the contribution to sustainable development in Cuenca, through a case study focused on ICLEI's intervention. Firstly, a theoretical foundation regarding social responsibility and sustainable development, from evaluating the level of contribution of social responsibility to sustainable development in Cuenca will be evaluated, analyzing the role of ICLEI, identifying the main challenges and opportunities for the implementation of social responsibility practices in Cuenca.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a term that emerged based on the growing concern of the international community to find an effective way to meet current needs without compromising the resources of future

generations. "It is in the hands of humanity to ensure that development is sustainable, that is, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own (Gómez Gutiérrez, 2017).

Sustainable development is not only a basic concept in this current era; it can also be interpreted as a way of looking at the world, as a method to solve global problems, or as a means to address the need to reconcile individual and collective well-being (Stahel & Cedra, 2015).

According to the Banco Mundial (2023), sustainable development is understood as a synonym of economic growth in the framework of a market economy, and at the same time protects the environment and promotes social inclusion. The same is guided under three fundamental pillars which are: poverty reduction, environmental protection, and the promotion of social inclusion; which are framed in the SDGs Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs represent one of the largest global consequences; these were proposed and agreed by the United Nations in 2015 by 193 member countries of the United Nations General Assembly and are represented by 17 goals and 169 targets. The SDGs are aimed at promoting and ensuring that all people enjoy their peace and prosperity, and that all countries work together to achieve a sustainable future (PNUD, 2024). These goals were created based on three fundamental pillars of sustainable development, which are mentioned below:

- **Economic Sustainability:** The purpose of economic sustainability is to correctly study the distribution of scarce resources to meet the needs of human beings and ensure economic growth. So that, at the same time this is inclusive and respectful of the environment. The objective of economic sustainability tends to be very greatly broad as it encompasses studies and analysis of how the prices of goods and productive factors such as labor, capital and land are set, as well as the growth of developing countries (Castaño Martínez, 2013).
- **Social sustainability:** Social sustainability proposes that future generations have the same opportunities as previous generations where the progress of the economy can improve the education of knowledge and innovation. Also, within social sustainability, it also includes the concept of intergenerational equity, which focuses on considering the costs of present economic development and the demand of future generations promoting sustainability (Castaño Martínez, 2013).
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Environmental sustainability focuses especially on everything that has to do with biodiversity, soil, water, and forests. "These are resources that in the short term determine the productive capacity of certain spaces" (Sepúlveda et al., 1998). This dimension is based on the fact that development depends on the capacity of institutions and the various economic agents to understand and manage, according to a long-term perspective, everything that is framed with renewable and non-renewable natural resources (Castaño Martínez, 2013).

The interconnection that exists between these three pillars is fundamental for sustainability, given that an economic development that does not protect the environment nor generate social welfare is not sustainable in the long term. In short, sustainability is only achieved through an approach that integrates them, since by working together we can build a sustainable future for future generations.

Social responsibility is defined as a form of management with which companies can work sustainably. In recent years, the topic of social responsibility has gained relevance in the business world, concerning its reason to exist. The context in which it is relevant, and how it should be exercised, among other aspects. In this way, it is determined that social responsibility is nothing more than the commitment of companies to the ethical values that give meaning to sustainable development initiatives, constantly seeking a business strategy that incorporates economic growth with social welfare and environmental protection (Ríos, 2019).

The concept of social responsibility is, fundamentally, an ethical concept. It involves modifying ideas about human welfare and highlights the interest in the social dimensions of business activity that relate to improving the quality of life (Gilli, 2006).

Social responsibility is a term that is in constant transformation. It appeared in 1800 at the height of corporate philanthropy, when most companies were investing in the community to improve their public image. In 1953, Howard Bowen published "Social Responsibilities of Businessman", the first work to define the concept of corporate social responsibility. In 1983, the World Economic Forum (WEF) was founded in Davos,

Switzerland to foster cooperation between companies, political leaders, and other civil society leaders to promote social responsibility and improve the state of the world (Foro Económico Mundial, 2024).

In 1999, the United Nations Global Compact was published, which was an initiative that invited organizations to commit to 10 principles related to human rights, labor, environment, and corruption. These were as follows: Supporting and respecting the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; not being party to human rights abuses; upholding freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor, the effective abolition of child labor, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment; supporting a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; pursuing initiatives to encourage greater environmental responsibility; promoting the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies; Working against corruption in all its forms such as extortion and bribery (Pacto Mundial, 2018).

Finally, after years of struggle in which companies were increasingly committed to social responsibility, in 2015 the UN adopted the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which include goals related to SR, such as the promotion of decent work, environmental protection, and the fight against poverty. It is important to note that CSR became even more influential as a result of the environmental crises and social inequality brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, causing companies to increasingly seek to contribute to sustainable and responsible development (Kliksberg, 2011).

According to Kliksberg (2011), in the new and current stage of Corporate Social Responsibility, companies are required to have good corporate governance, good relationships with personnel, transparent relationships with the consumer, preservation of the environment, and together with this, an effective social commitment. These guidelines are important to achieve an effective social responsibility within the companies that promote it.

Relationship between Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility

Sustainable development and social responsibility are two terms that are closely related and that nowadays play a crucial role in society. As they are useful and effective tools to improve the productive model, providing advantages that benefit not only companies but also society in general and the environment. The objective is to promote sustainability and prosperity by betting on social progress where a better future for all is ensured through the cooperation of all sectors of society (Becerra et al., 2020).

Social responsibility, by having the organization as the center of interest concerning its organizational responsibilities towards society and the environment, is linked to sustainable development. By referring to common economic, social, and environmental objectives among all people, sustainable development can be used to summarize the broad societal expectations that need to be considered by organizations seeking to act responsibly. Therefore, the primary objective of a socially responsible organization will always be to contribute to sustainable development where its relationship starts (Espantaleon, 2012).

It should be noted that sustainable development cannot be achieved without efficient management of social responsibility by organizations, as this is key to their long-term success. By being socially responsible, companies become more attractive to investors, customers, and employees. Therefore, a large number of organizations are currently more committed to sustainable development (Pacto Mundial, 2018).

In order to achieve efficient management, it is necessary to seek strategic alliances, which will facilitate the fulfillment of the proposed objectives based on social responsibility and sustainable development. These have to focus on environmental protection and the promotion of peace and security where collaboration and joint work of all sectors of society are fundamental in this area.

Alliances are nothing more than an association to achieve common objectives among members, these are characterized by combining competitive and cooperative elements in an environment of shared control. In general, alliances can be aimed at providing services, financing projects, and promoting local development, among others. They can be a powerful tool to address complex challenges and achieve a positive impact on sustainable development issues (Del Prado, 2005).

Partnerships are classified according to the actors involved, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and Public-Social Partnerships (PSA). In the case of PPPs, better known as public-private partnerships, they consist of collaboration agreements between the public sector, such as governments, public administrations, and the private sector (companies), for the provision of goods, works, or public services. Public-private partnerships are characterized by improving efficiency and effectiveness in the objectives set,

and by always attracting private investments to finance public projects that focus on sustainable development issues (Cañeque, 2007).

On the other hand, there are public-social partnerships, which are collaboration agreements between the public sector and the civil society (ONGs, associations, unions) for the management of a service or the promotion of a common good. In a PPP, the society becomes an active participant in the decision-making process of the management and evaluation of the project. These PPP aim to improve public services, strengthen civil society, and encourage its participation in decision-making on environmental preservation and sustainable development issues (Martinez et al., 2023).

Inter-institutional Cooperation

Inter-institutional cooperation is understood as a formal agreement between two or more institutions, both public and private that join together to work on projects or activities of common interest. The objective of this cooperation is to share resources that contribute to institutional strengthening and economic, social, or environmental development (María De Allende & Morones Díaz, 2006).

Inter-institutional cooperation has always played a fundamental role in sustainable development working as an essential tool, which is in charge of public and private institutions of civil society working together taking advantage of all their resources to achieve a more notable impact on the achievement of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

It is important to mention that for cooperation between institutions to be successful, it must consist of effective planning to establish common objectives: effective communication, the allows transparent information sharing, coordination establishing mechanisms to ensure the coherence and proper functioning of cooperation, trust between institutions, and follow-up to guarantee the sustainability of cooperation (Gomez, 2007).

Similarly, for cooperation to be effective, it must go hand in hand with partnerships, since they are closely related and are useful for establishing relationships and building trust between the parties. The Municipality of Cuenca, in partnership with ICLEI, is implementing a series of projects focused on urban management, citizen security and sustainability.

In Cuenca, this issue is becoming increasingly relevant, especially in the business sector, since about 70% of local companies are more committed to sustainability and social development. They are integrating socially responsible behavior in organizations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors, regardless of their size or whether they operate internationally or nationally. However, there are still companies that have a long way to go, as they are not yet aware of the benefits of CSR, or they do not have the necessary resources to implement effective social responsibility programs (GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023).

Therefore, many social responsibility projects require strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, such as "Cuenca Inclusive City" a project that had the support of the Municipality of Cuenca and several ministries, but unfortunately needed greater coordination between the institutions involved to ensure efficiency in the use of resources and coherence of actions. Therefore, the city authorities have seen the need for the creation of new agreements with institutions such as ICLEI, which help the authorities with the implementation of practices for the execution of sustainable projects where inter-institutional cooperation is effective and efficient (ICLEI & GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023).

ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) is an international organization that provides resources, services, and platforms for local governments to address challenges such as climate change, urban resilience, natural resource management, and sustainability. In short, it acts as a catalyst for sustainable development at the local level, connecting and supporting local authorities in the implementation of practices that promote a balance between environmental, social, and economic aspects. Currently, this organization maintains an agreement with the Municipality of Cuenca to support sustainable development under a strict framework of social responsibility.

ICLEI is an international organization of local and regional governments committed to sustainable development. Founded in 1990 by 200 local governments from 43 countries, it began its operations in Latin America in 1994, establishing its secretariat for South America in São Paulo, Brazil. ICLEI currently has two secretariats, the Secretariat for South America which is managed by the ICLEI office in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and the Secretariat for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (MECS), managed by the ICLEI office in Mexico.

ICLEI's mission focuses on building and serving a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability through cumulative action. In its vision ICLEI aspires to a world in which all local and regional governments are leaders in building a sustainable, and equitable future. One of the organization's main objectives is to promote sustainable development at the local level, strengthen the capacity of local governments to implement sustainable policies and programs, and stimulate cooperation among local governments around the world.

ICLEI has had a significant impact in the world especially in Latin America as it has helped multiple local governments to implement a wide range of policies that promote sustainability among these are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and currently Ecuador. These countries have implemented policies based on reducing pollution and climate change, protecting the environment, improving the quality of life and promoting equity and inclusion (ICLEI, 2024).

ICLEI currently has an agreement with the GAD Municipality of Cuenca, valid until 2025. Among its most relevant clauses is the implementation of a series of policies and programs such as the creation of a Youth Center to promote youth participation in sustainable development issues and the improvement of urban safety status through inter-institutional cooperation and the promotion of equity and inclusion.

The Youth Center implemented by ICLEI in Cuenca is a project based on three fundamental pillars: environmental education and citizen participation, which seeks to make young people aware of the importance of preserving the environment and provide them with the necessary tools to take action in their communities; citizen participation, which offers training programs to encourage the active participation of young people in building a more sustainable city; and green entrepreneurship, which promotes the creation of green jobs and promotes innovation in the environmental sector (ICLEI & GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023)

In the case of improving the status of urban safety, the "Safe and Sound Cities" (S2 Cities) program was created, led by GIB (Global Infrastructure Basel) in partnership with ICLEI, which seeks to create healthy and safe cities through the inclusion and participation of young people between the ages of 15 and 24, promoting the creation of inclusive urban environments. For the implementation of this program, a previous analysis of urban safety and a compilation of youth perspectives on safety, public space, mobility, participation, and issues related to material, relational, and personal well-being were carried out (ICLEI et al., 2024).

2. Methods

The methodology used in this research work will be qualitative in approach, with a descriptive scope. According to Hernández Sampieri & Mendoza Torres (2018), the purpose of a qualitative approach is to examine and describe how individuals perceive and experience the phenomena that surround them, deepening their points of view, interpretations, and meanings.

In order to achieve the proposed objective in this research, the literature review in academic sources will be based on the following search terms: social responsibility, sustainability, and inter-institutional cooperation, for the elaboration of the theoretical framework. From this, a matrix of categories will be elaborated to analyze the required information.

The study will be carried out in Cuenca; people involved with the Municipality of Cuenca, who know and manage the ICLEI project, as well as people who do not belong to the Municipality of Cuenca but are managers or executors of any of the ICLEI projects, will participate in this study.

The techniques used in this research will be the semi-structured interview, which consists of the collection of in-depth and detailed information on the topic in question; and documentary analysis, which is a procedure that allows extracting relevant information from a document and organizing it so that it can be used later. Therefore, an interview guide and a documentary analysis matrix, based on the categories to be analyzed, will be used as instruments.

To analyze the information obtained, in the first instance, a documentary review will be carried out through a category analysis matrix in which relevant information will be recorded to achieve the objective of the study, followed by the transcription of the interviews, information that will also be systematized in the category analysis matrix.

Table 1
Analysis categories matrix

Categories	Conceptualization	Subcategories	Indicators
Social Responsibility	<p>Corporate social responsibility refers to the impact that companies and institutions have on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of their activities (Ayala del Pino, 2020).</p> <p>Corporate social responsibility is defined as the set of national and international legal and ethical obligations and commitments to stakeholders arising from the impact of organizations' business activities on the social, labor, environmental and human rights spheres (Ayala del Pino, 2020).</p>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility</p> <p>Governmental Social Responsibility</p>	<p>Corporate Social Responsibility programs</p>
Sustainable Development	<p>Sustainable development is based on finding an effective way to meet the needs of the present without compromising the resources of future generations "It is up to humanity to ensure that development is sustainable, that is, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Gómez Gutiérrez, 2017).</p>	<p>Economic sustainability</p> <p>Social sustainability</p> <p>Environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Responsible production and consumption</p> <p>Poverty reduction, health and well-being.</p> <p>Sustainable cities and communities, responsible production and consumption, alliances to achieve the objectives.</p>
Inter-institutional Cooperation	<p>Inter-institutional cooperation is understood as a formal agreement between two or more institutions, both public and private, that join together to work on projects or activities of common interest. This cooperation aims to share resources that contribute to institutional strengthening and economic, social or environmental development (María De Allende & Morones Díaz, 2006).</p>		<p>Objectives of inter-institutional cooperation</p>
Alliances	<p>Alliances are defined as a league of business facets between two or more companies, in which the effectiveness of the competitive strategies of the participating companies is enhanced by means of strategies of the participating</p>	<p>Intergovernmental alliances</p> <p>Internal alliances</p>	<p>Development of long-term relationships, shared objectives.</p>

companies through the exchange of technologies, skills or products based on them.

3. Results

In order to achieve the objective proposed in this research, two research techniques were used: the documentary review and the semi-structured interview. In order to apply these two techniques a documentary analysis matrix and an interview guide were elaborated, respectively. These tools were based on the categories of analysis selected for the study: social responsibility, sustainable development, partnerships, and inter-institutional cooperation.

3.1 Documentary analysis:

The documents analyzed for the present study were: the Memorandum of Understanding between ICLEI South America and GAD Municipal del canton Cuenca and the official document of the "Safe and Sound Cities" project.

The Memorandum of Understanding between ICLEI South America and GAD Municipal del Canton Cuenca was celebrated in Cuenca in 2020.

Among its most relevant clauses, there are a series of policies and programs that allude to sustainable development and social responsibility, such as the Youth Center, which has had a positive impact on the community of Cuenca, as it has served as an example of how to work with young people to build a more sustainable future (ICLEI & GAD Municipal de Cuenca, 2023). Similarly, programs that promote urban safety through inter-institutional cooperation and the promotion of equity and inclusion, such as Safe and Sound Cities.

In terms of ICLEI's contribution, the document notes that during the term of this agreement, positive results have already been obtained in other projects such as the implementation of a sustainable public transportation system that has reduced air and noise pollution, increased investment in education and health, and the implementation of a wide range of corporate social responsibility (CSR) resources and training that help companies to develop effective CSR programs.

On the other hand, the official report of the "Safe and Sound Cities" project, one of the most relevant programs in which ICLEI has participated, was analyzed. In this document were found the progress and results obtained in this program that was designed to improve safety and quality of life in cities through the implementation of innovative technologies and strategies. This program is characterized for including several initiatives such as training of security personnel and citizen participation in crime prevention, installation of intelligent surveillance systems, creation of green spaces, etc.

Table 2
Documental analysis matrix

Categories	Memorandum of Understanding ICLEI South America and GAD Municipal de Cuenca	Safe and Sound Cities Report
Description	<p>The agreement between ICLEI South America and GAD Municipal de Cuenca was signed in January 2023 for three years. This memorandum establishes clauses detailing how the GAD Municipal de Cuenca will receive support from ICLEI to promote sustainability.</p>	<p>The pilot phase of this program was launched between 2021 and 2022 in two growing secondary cities, including Ambato. It was subsequently expanded to other cities including Cuenca, which is distinguished by its focus on youth development as a priority in its city agenda. Currently, the first edition of this program in Cuenca has concluded with outstanding results.</p>
Social Responsibility	<p>This document implicitly shows how the objectives to be achieved are aligned and promote social responsibility in Cuenca.</p>	<p>This document highlights that social responsibility is an integral component in the execution of the projects in this program since each one of them is oriented towards the welfare of the community.</p>
Sustainable Development	<p>This memorandum of understanding states that it is intended to be achieved through projects such as S2 cities whose objective is to promote sustainability in Cuenca.</p>	<p>All projects within this program aim to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); with the vision of building healthy, safe, and sustainable cities.</p>
Inter-institutional Cooperation	<p>Within the framework of the S2 cities project, it is detailed how the company will collaborate with international, regional and local entities, such as GIB, ICLEI, Fundación Amaru, Huasipichanga, Fundación Botnar, to achieve the proposed objectives in terms of sustainability.</p>	<p>The document highlights the participation of different entities such as Mobility Management, EMOV EP, EDEC EP, Culture, Environmental Management Commission, Territorial Planning, International Relations, Social Development through the Youth House. These entities have contributed to the development of the proposed projects, promoting inter-institutional cooperation and internal alliances.</p>
Alliances	<p>The purpose of the agreement is that formally establish the alliance between ICLEI and the Municipality of Cuenca, which also specifies that additional alliances will be developed based on this agreement.</p>	<p>The S2 Cities program, has a global , maintains a network of contacts with participating partner cities. This network allows them to present some challenges and work together with the network to find solutions that meet the proposed objectives oriented towards sustainability.</p>

3.2 Semi-structured interview

As part of the research, 3 interviews were applied: one directed to the director of the external relations department of the Municipality of Cuenca, who from now on will be referred to as the official of the Municipality of Cuenca, Mr. Felipe Ochoa, to obtain information about the policies and actions of the institution in terms of social responsibility and sustainable development. Another one was directed to the institutional representative of ICLEI in Ecuador, Mr. Javier Reyes, in order to gather information about ICLEI's activity in the country. Finally, an interview directed to the director of Safe and Sound Cities, Mr. Fabián Bermeo, in order to obtain information about ICLEI's activity in the country. Javier Reyes, in order to gather information about ICLEI's activity in the country. Finally, an interview with the director of Safe and Sound Cities, Mg. Fabián Bermeo, to know the impact that this project has had in collaboration with ICLEI, being one of the most important in the city of Cuenca. For the interviews, the categories of analysis selected for this study were used.

Social Responsibility

Mr. Felipe Ochoa highlighted the commitment to social responsibility in the city of Cuenca, emphasizing that the public sector is one of the main promoters of this cause. He emphasized that all projects implemented by the Municipality are aimed at the collective benefit. He mentioned that, unlike private companies, public entities have limitations to benefit third parties, prioritizing the welfare of the community. However, he acknowledged that the private sector has also contributed to some extent to social responsibility through policies that promote this approach.

Fabián Bermeo agreed that the Municipality is an important player in the area of social responsibility. Concerning the S2 Cities project, he highlighted the obligation to work in collaboration with public-private institutions to promote corporate social responsibility in the city.

In another scenario, Mr. Javier Reyes emphasized the significant impact of ICLEI by working directly with the Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs) of each region. He emphasized that all projects associated with ICLEI are oriented towards collective welfare, which guarantees an important impact in terms of social responsibility.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Felipe Ochoa emphasized that Cuenca has always been characterized by the importance it has given to sustainable development, and therefore its public-private sector has been one of those who have contributed the most to it, focusing from economic development to environmental preservation; Cuenca within its "voluntary local report" presents that the city focuses on meeting 4 specific SDGs, which are gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work, economic growth, sustainable cities and communities.

Javier Reyes highlighted that ICLEI as an international organization focuses on five lines of action to promote sustainable development in the different local governments with which they work: low carbon, equitable, resilient, and circular. Each one of these aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, include the community in projects, manage climate risks and promote a circular economy.

On the other hand, Magister Fabian Bermeo highlights the importance of approaching sustainable development from different perspectives and concrete actions. He mentions that within the S2 cities program, hackathons are held, which are competitions where the aim is to generate an innovative solution that promotes environmental sustainability, highlighting the importance of education and awareness of sustainability issues. Finally, he stresses that sustainable development is gaining relevance, especially among new generations and local administrations, suggesting a positive change based on responsible and sustainable practices in the city.

Inter-institutional Cooperation

In terms of inter-institutional cooperation, Mr. Felipe Ochoa highlights the importance and success of collaboration between different institutions, both locally and internationally. In the case of Cuenca, it is mentioned that it has had an outstanding performance in this aspect since the city's priority has always been to establish contacts and collaborate with international cooperators, which has been key for its development and it is emphasized that this cooperation has transcended through different administrations, which suggests continuity in inter-institutional collaboration policies over time.

He highlighted the Safe and Sound Cities program since this project involves the collaboration of several international, regional and local entities such as the GIB (Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation), Huasipinchanga Foundation, Amaru Foundation, among others, which demonstrates the need for strong inter-institutional collaboration for the successful implementation of these projects.

On the other hand, Magister Fabian Bermeo affirmed that inter-institutional cooperation is necessary because it contributes to the development of the projects, however, there are limitations and challenges related to administrative issues, bureaucracy, lack of support for networking, among others.

Alliances

Mr. Felipe Ochoa mentions the importance of collaboration between different entities and organizations, as is the case of the network of cities and "United Cities and Governments". He emphasizes that these alliances function as a kind of UN of cities, which allows cities to have a joint voice in multilateral forums and to obtain funds for the implementation of projects.

In the same way, Magister Javier Reyes mentioned that partnerships for ICLEI are fundamental to provide support to local governments as it is a global network that has been active for 40 years, which Cuenca joined in 2016. The importance of these alliances lies in the fact that they help in the implementation of local projects, facilitating access to resources, knowledge, and technical support necessary to carry out sustainable development initiatives in cities.

Similarly, Magister Fabian Bermeo emphasized that partnerships are fundamental to the success of projects, especially in terms of financing and technical support. It should be noted that through the management of the consortium implementing the S2 cities program, it has been possible to establish partnerships with various international entities, which have contributed significantly to the program.

4. Discussion

Social Responsibility

When we talk about social responsibility, Ríos (2019) mentions that it is a form of management from which companies and institutions can work sustainably; they make it clear that in the context of Cuenca, one of the sectors that contributes most to social responsibility is the public sector since service to the community is the reason for its existence, as it is part of its obligations; and they do so in terms of projects aimed at sustainable development.

Gilli (2006) describes social responsibility from a relational perspective, in which he considers that it modifies the notion of human welfare, highlighting the interest in the social dimensions of business activity that are related to improving the quality of life. Thus, the testimony of the representative of the Municipality highlights the contribution of the private sector to social responsibility, focusing its contribution on the economic development of the city, mentioning that in Cuenca, the private sector contributed to the GDP per capita reaches \$13000, surpassing the national average of \$80,000 and positioning Cuenca as an outstanding city in terms of economic indicators. Although Cuenca has been characterized for promoting sustainable development at the national level due to its power management and good resource management, it has faced great challenges, among the main ones are: unnecessary administrative procedures, lack of resources, lack of transparency, among others, hindering the fulfillment of planned processes.

Sustainable Development

Regarding sustainable development, the Banco Mundial (2023) states that sustainable development is understood as a synonym of economic growth within the framework of a market economy, which in turn protects the environment and promotes social inclusion; within the context of Cuenca, the level of contribution that has been given to sustainable development in the city is reflected in the projects carried out in collaboration with ICLEI, among them is the Safe and Sound Cities project, focusing on the promotion of healthy and sustainable cities. This project has actively involved the youth community, which has led to the implementation of two initiatives: "Arteria", a project that seeks the recovery of green spaces in urban areas through the implementation of sustainable furniture, linking business and culture of the place; and "Bibliorio" which

focuses on creating a safe outdoor space for young people to perform activities related to literature, encouraging reading and creating a connection with the environment.

Both projects stand out for their focus on economic, social, and environmental sustainability, and for their contribution in terms of inter-institutional cooperation and strategic alliances. However, based on the testimony of the representative of S2 cities, these projects have faced great challenges to comply with the sustainable development objectives; for example, breaking the barriers of active listening of medium-sized cities that do not have a voice in international forums, as is the case of Cuenca; along the way they encounter many obstacles of different orders that prevent the fulfillment of the objectives set; among the most important are mentioned: excessive procedures for obtaining permits, bureaucracy in unnecessary administrative procedures, as well as corruption and nepotism.

3Inter- institutional Cooperation

Inter-institutional cooperation is defined as a formal agreement between two or more institutions that can be both public and private, the same that collaborate to work together on projects or activities of common interest (María De Allende & Morones Díaz, 2006). In this case study it complies with the theory, as it is evident that the agreement between ICLEI and the Municipality of Cuenca, has been key to obtaining positive results; Specifically, the Safe and Sound Cities project had the active participation of several public and private entities, such as EMOV EP, EMAC EP, EDEC EP, Commission of Environmental Management, Territorial Planning, Social Development, among others; whose contributions strengthened this cooperation, through the exchange of information and resources, as well as the realization of joint training and capacity building; setting a precedent for the development and management of new projects.

Thus, both in the documentary review and in the testimony of the interviewees, the active participation of these entities in the generation of a greater awareness of sustainable development among the city's young people stands out. In addition, the institutions have been able to take initiatives to increase their responsibility towards society. A clear example is the CREA cooperative, which not only provides financial support to the project in its development but also actively contributes its experience and resources to its success, as mentioned by the S2 Cities project director.

Alliances

In terms of alliances, we can mention that they are associations to achieve common objectives among members, characterized by combining competitive and cooperative elements in an environment of shared control (Del Prado, 2005). In the case of the alliance between ICLEI and the Municipality of Cuenca, it has integrally capitalized on its strengths, as described in the documentary review. On one hand, ICLEI brings a global network of collaboration and community connection, along with technical resources and a deep knowledge of sustainable development issues worldwide; while the Municipality contributes with its local knowledge of the specific challenges and opportunities of the city, which makes this combination ensure that the project is effectively implemented and adapted to the needs of the community.

Thus, in order to strengthen the relationship between the institutions, we can appreciate the work carried out by each of the entities that have formed this alliance to meet the proposed objectives. Thus, the Safe and Sound Cities project involves organizations such as: Husipichanga, Fundación Amaru, Consultorio Jurídico Integrar, Fundación Bonard, GIB; organizations that from their own experience have managed to develop efficient work that contributes notably to the city; providing integral management training, helping to the greater capacity of influence within the policies and regulations related to the project, and to the obtaining of financial and technological resources. However, it should be clarified that despite being theoretically effective, as mentioned by Cañeque (2007), partnerships are characterized by improving efficiency and effectiveness in the objectives set, and also by attracting private investment to finance public projects that focus on sustainable development issues, in practice they are not completely as efficient as expected, since in the context of Cuenca these partnerships tend to provide support according to their requirements and possibilities, which leads to certain difficulties in not obtaining 100% of the required support. As the representative of the Municipality pointed out, although partnerships are fundamental for influencing multilateral organizations and developing a global network among cities, they often lack great influence when it comes to obtaining funding for projects or streamlining administrative processes that are often unnecessary.

Thus, it was evident that the formation of alliances between institutions contributed positively to the projects aimed at the sustainable development of the city of Cuenca, even though the fact that they were subject to a series of challenges and obstacles; if it had not been for them, it would not have been possible to achieve these projects. Considering the above, it is possible to demonstrate the level of contribution and contribution that has been made to the citizens through the development and execution of these socially responsible projects to meet the sustainable development objectives.

5. Conclusion

While the collaboration between ICLEI and the Municipality has allowed for a valuable exchange of best practices and knowledge on sustainable development issues, it is important to mention that ICLEI's role has been mainly that of a mediator, facilitating the connection between the Municipality, international organizations, and other local governments. Concluding that although its management is focused on linkage and not on direct funding, it is evident that many projects face difficulties for their full implementation due to scarce resources. In some cases, the search for additional funding may prove to be an additional obstacle, rather than generating effective support. This leads to these projects being referred to other international entities that can provide the expected support.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that in order to achieve the implementation of social responsibility practices that go hand in hand with sustainable development in Cuenca, it was found that these processes are halted and affected by the level of bureaucracy and the lack of management in the required procedures; a situation that is important to consider for future projects, so that the procedures are managed regardless of these particularities.

In another aspect, it is crucial to determine that sustainable development and social responsibility are just beginning to gain momentum, as it is regrettable to note that they have not been given the necessary importance due to the lack of socialization in the public. It is also worrying that these projects are mostly directed towards the youth community, without providing the opportunity for other sectors of society to actively participate, which has led to the lack of implementation of social responsibility practices and the contribution and support to the management of projects that significantly benefit the city in terms of sustainable development.

It is worth mentioning that the gathering of information and obtaining of resources for the execution of this research work became complex due to the secrecy, lack of coordination, and organizational complexity, which became barriers that did not allow the achievement of the proposed objectives.

Based on the above, it should be concluded by emphasizing that when considering work immersed in the public sector, especially in terms of agreements, the challenge is great, due to all the circumstances that must be faced when requiring the necessary information, however, the experience gained during this time has been enriching, as it leaves a significant learning, allowing a clear understanding of the role played by partnerships and inter-institutional cooperation within the practices of social responsibility to contribute to sustainable development in Cuenca.

Finally, it is suggested that the link between academia and the public sector be strengthened in order to develop research communities, to expand projects that benefit more sectors of the population, involving various stakeholders.

6. References

- Ayala del Pino, Cristina. (2020). *La Responsabilidad Social Corporativa: concepto, ámbito de aplicación, grupos de interés y objetivos*. [Corporate Social Responsibility: concept, scope of application, stakeholders and objectives].
- Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. (2022). *Ciudades Sostenibles de America Latina y el Caribe* . https://www.iadb.org/es/project-search?query=ciudades+sostenibles+de+America+Latina+y+el+caribe&f_sector=&f_country_name=&f_project_status=&f_operation_number=&f_from=&f_to=&f_approval_date=
- Banco Mundial. (2023, June 21). *El Atlas de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible 2023, una visualización del desarrollo*. Grupo Banco Mundial. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/es/opendata/el-atlas-de-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible-2023-una-visualizacion-del-desarrollo>
- Becerra, S. M., Martha, A., & Guerrero, I. M. (2020). *EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE Y LA RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL EMPRESARIAL*.
- Cañeque, F. C. (2007). *ALIANZAS PÚBLICO-PRIVADAS PARA EL DESARROLLO*.
- Castaño Martínez, C. (2013). *Los pilares del desarrollo sostenible: sofisma o realidad*.
- Del Prado, L. (2005). *Boletín de Lecturas Sociales y Económicas • UCA • FCSE • Año 3 • N° 13*.
- Espantaleon, A. (2012). *Relación entre Responsabilidad Social y Desarrollo Sostenible*. RSCYMAS. <https://rscymas.wordpress.com/2012/10/08/relacion-entre-responsabilidad-social-y-desarrollo-sostenible/>
- Foro Económico Mundial. (2024). *World Economic Forum*. <https://es.weforum.org/about/history/>
- GAD Municipal de Cuenca. (2023a). *Cinturón Verde de Cuenca*. GAD de Cuenca.
- GAD Municipal de Cuenca. (2023b). *Convenios de Cooperación Interinstitucional* . GAD de Cuenca. <https://www.cuenca.gob.ec/search/node?keys=cooperacion+interinstitucional>
- GAD Municipal de Cuenca. (2023c, April 6). *ORDENANZA QUE REGULA LA PLANIFICACIÓN Y EJECUCIÓN DE PROYECTOS HABITACIONALES DE INTERÉS SOCIAL EN LA MODALIDAD DE URBANIZACIÓN Y VIVIENDA PROGRESIVAS*. GAD de Cuenca. <https://www.cuenca.gob.ec/node/8997>
- Gilli, J. J. (2006). *RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL*.
- Gómez Gutiérrez, C. (2017). *III. EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE: CONCEPTOS BÁSICOS, ALCANCE Y CRITERIOS PARA SU EVALUACIÓN*.
- Gomez, M. de los A. (2007). *Facultad de Derecho Área de Investigación*.
- Hernández Sampieri, R., & Mendoza Torres, C. P. (2018). *Metodología de la investigación : las rutas cuantitativa, cualitativa y mixta*.
- ICLEI. (2024). *ICLEI América del Sur*. ICLEI Gobiernos Locales Para La Sostenibilidad . <https://americadosul.iclei.org/es/associados/canton-cuenca/>
- ICLEI, Fundación Botnar, Huasipichanga S.A.S, Fundación Integrar Cía, Fundación Amaru, & GAD Municipal de Cuenca. (2024). *Safe and Sound Cities Cuenca (S2Cities)*.
- ICLEI, & GAD Municipal de Cuenca. (2023). *MEMORANDO DE ENTENDIMIENTO POR Y ENTRE ICLEI AMÉRICA DEL SUR Y GOBIERNO AUTÓNOMO DESCENTRALIZADO MUNICIPAL DEL CANTÓN CUENCA*.

- Kliksberg, B. (2011). *RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL EMPRESARIAL: ¿MODA O DEMANDA SOCIAL?* * * *
- María De Allende, C., & Morones Díaz, G. (2006). *GLOSARIO DE TÉRMINOS VINCULADOS CON LA COOPERACIÓN ACADÉMICA*.
- Martinez, V., Vallejo, M. F., & Faro. (2023). *Alianzas públicas, privadas y sociales: motivaciones, roles, capacidades e intereses de los tres sectores*.
- Observatorio Regional de Planificación para el Desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe. (2017). *Desarrollo Urbano*. <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/urban-development>
- Pacto Mundial. (2018). *El Pacto Mundial de la ONU*. <https://www.un.org/es/cr%C3%B3nica-onu/el-pacto-mundial-de-la-onu-la-b%C3%BAqueda-de-soluciones-para-retos-globales>
- PNUD. (2024). *LOS ODS EN ACCIÓN*. Programa de Las Naciones Unidas Para El Desarrollo. <https://www.undp.org/es/sustainable-development-goals>
- Ríos, M. G. N. Á. J. C. M. (2019). *RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL EMPRESARIAL: UN ANÁLISIS DESDE EL ÁPICE ESTRATÉGICO AL NÚCLEO OPERATIVO EN LA INDUSTRIA ALIMENTARIA DE CUENCA-ECUADOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE STRATEGIC APEX TO THE OPERATIONAL CORE IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY OF CUENCA-ECUADOR*. 23, 33–42.
- Sepúlveda, S., Castro, A., & Rojas, P. (1998). *Metodología para Estimar el Nivel de Desarrollo Sostenible en Espacios Territoriales*. 4, 18.
- Stahel, A., & Cedra, J. (2015). *SOSTENIBILIDAD TECNOLOGÍA Y HUMANISMO DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE: ¿SABEMOS DE QUÉ ESTAMOS HABLANDO?*

7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview matrix

Magister. Felipe Ochoa	
DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT	
Social Responsibility; Sustainable Development; Interinstitutional Cooperation; Partnerships; Alliances	
Questions	Answers
1. What are the main challenges you consider that Cuenca faces to achieve sustainable development?	I believe that one of the most important challenges of the city of Cuenca is to break down the barriers to actively listen to the voices of those of us who have the strength as actors, and I will explain it on two levels: first, we can compare Cuenca with Bogota. In the case of Cuenca, we have the opportunity to position ourselves on issues of sustainable development and the fulfillment of the SDGs, because being a medium-sized city we can solve any type of challenge more easily compared to Bogota, however one of the biggest difficulties we face is that an intermediate city like Cuenca does not have the same voice in global forums as larger cities like Bogota, which hinders its influence on the global agenda. On the other hand, the second level of challenge is focused at the country level, where we will highlight the importance that all cities must be heard in the global agenda, as many municipal and territorial competencies are relevant to achieving the SDGs, however, the approach of the multilateral is a problem for us as they still operate with requirements and bureaucratic processes of the twentieth century, hindering the obtaining of funding for sustainable development projects promptly; and it can be said that we are still waiting for the modernization of these processes and to overcome the bureaucratic barriers to promote sustainable development at the local level.
2. What role do partnerships and inter-agency cooperation play in achieving sustainable development? Do you consider these to be important?	I believe that they do not have much influence, they are important because they are the ones that help to put pressure but they do not have much influence, since they are used to solve 21st-century problems with 20th-century requirements, they have not helped to make the requirements for credit more flexible, neither does the government, which is why we cities are involved in this, trying to solve and meet all the Sustainable Development Goals, but without financing or money from these large funds.
3. What type of alliances do you consider to be the most relevant within the ICLEI agreement?	The most significant alliances in the city of Cuenca that have impacted the execution of projects are part of an extensive network of cities with which we have partnered. This network has considerable power, representing not only Cuenca, but over 250,000 affiliates in United Cities and Governments, making it a UN for cities, lobbying the UN itself. This is why I consider that these associations and networks have been extremely beneficial, since through them we have obtained important funds.
4. What tools and resources do you consider to be the most useful for the management of inter-institutional cooperation and sustainable development projects?	The application of international funds, the permanent and active character that has a city against another, that is to say, Cuenca has done very well in international and inter-institutional cooperation issues, for several years compared to the capital of Ecuador. That is why we are considered as pioneers of cooperation and this has been because Cuenca has always been active in these issues, for example in 1999 we entered the cultural heritage of humanity and then entered the organization of heritage cities, ten years later we had a president of the world network of heritage cities that was Mayor Cabrera. Then we had people who started to travel and to have contacts with international cooperators, making Cuenca quite active and the important thing is that this transcends between administrations.
5. Within a cooperation project, how do you ensure the active participation and commitment of all parties involved?	During my tenure as director, I have introduced a work methodology that focuses on the rigorous control and follow-up of projects. In this approach, I emphasize the figure of a management and articulation manager. For example, in the case of our project with EMAC EP, I do not delegate management to third parties, but personally take charge of it. This practice eliminates intermediaries, allowing me to maintain a comprehensive view of the project and to monitor its execution closely. To ensure the success of this approach, we carry out continuous and systematic monitoring.

<p>6. Do you think it is possible to manage social responsibility in the public sector? Or something related to the role of social responsibility in management, and alliances, among others.</p>	<p>In the public sector, a high degree of social responsibility is expected, since all its actions are aimed at collective welfare. Even public companies are obliged to prioritize the benefit of the community over that of third parties. However, it is undeniable that there have been cases of misappropriation of funds or inappropriate use of resources, which detracts from the purpose of social responsibility.</p> <p>In contrast, in the private sector, the situation is more complex and, at the same time, more agile. The implementation of initiatives is faster due to the flexibility and agility in decision-making, without being subject to the same controls and bureaucratic processes as in the public sector. In addition, the availability of capital and investors facilitates the implementation of projects. However, this agility comes with its challenges. The alignment between the public and private sectors is often fractured, as the private sector can operate independently, while the public sector is subject to bureaucratic, corrupt, or complicated procedures. In many cases, private companies prioritize their profit over the needs of the community, making it difficult to meet social demands.</p>
<p>7. Do you consider that the private sector has not contributed to sustainable development in Cuenca compared to the public sector?</p>	<p>No, because on the contrary, the private sector has been the one that has contributed the most to sustainable development, especially in economic development, since \$13.00 per capita in Cuenca while at the country level it is estimated at \$8000, Cuenca is an excellent city in terms of economic indicators apart from that and something grateful to the public sector is the basic services we have, 97% of sewerage and drinking water, 99% electricity coverage, 80% solid waste management. But despite that we have a challenge in terms of the SDGs, the municipality, public and private companies, how is it possible that while other companies worldwide are already talking about how to have zero carbon emissions, how they can give back to the city what it has given us in the abstract sense, we are still far away. On the other hand, Cuenca has decided to present the local voluntary report, with the objective that the city is taken into account in the fulfillment of the SDG goals; focusing specifically on 4 goals these: gender equality, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth and sustainable cities and communities.</p>

Magister. Javier Reyes	
ICLEI REPRESENTATIVE IN ECUADOR	
ICLEI and its influence on sustainable development and social responsibility	
Questions	Answer
<p>1. What are ICLEI's main lines of action?</p>	<p>ICLEI always works with its partners on 5 action lines: low carbon, nature-based, equitable, resilient, and circular, low carbon refers to the reduction of greenhouse gases, in resilient they support with risk analysis for key cities of climate action, with equitable refers to projects that must involve the community, in this case, would enter the project of healthy and safe cities because it involves a specific group such as young people; and circular refers to the circular economy, sustainable production, community food systems that involve rural communities, working specifically with prefectures, provincial governments, among others, and based on nature, they work with a topic that is currently in vogue.</p>
<p>2. How did ICLEI's presence in Ecuador and the link with the Municipal Government of Cuenca come about?</p>	<p>ICLEI is a global network that has been active for 40 years; it began working in the region in 1994 and in that same year in Quito, it became a member; it is the oldest network in the country. In 1916, Cuenca became a member of the network and has been working gradually and has been growing. As the work in the region began to grow, we saw the need to generate national offices, which is why we currently have one in Argentina in El Rosario and another in Medellin Colombia which is in charge of the Andean area where Ecuador enters.</p>

3. What are the projects carried out by ICLEI in cooperation with the Municipal Government of Cuenca?	In Cuenca there are three projects where ICLEI is intervening, S2 Cities is the most important in the city because it involves several international entities such as the GIB, the Bonard Foundation, while as a consortium implementing the project, we have Huasipichanga, Amaru Foundation, Integrar, among others. Currently, this project has come to an end. It should be noted that this project is also being implemented in Colombia and in Southeast Asia in Indonesia.
4. How does ICLEI visualize sustainable development in the region and what aspects are considered most relevant in this regard?	In this sense, Cuenca has presented stream management projects, for example, that belong to emblematic cities, that is, we support them with tips for a better development of the proposed projects. On the other hand, we have another project where we are working on the generation and protection of water resources around the city of Cuenca, the regeneration of protected areas such as the Cajas, and the linkage with other areas so that it is a macro work. ICLEI is also working with several experiences in the region and what is being done is to bring these experiences to Cuenca.
5. What have been the main challenges for ICLEI in achieving its objectives?	He has identified three: first, political instability, changes of government that generate problems; second, insecurity, episodes of violence that first generate a change of objectives, and municipal authorities are affected by criminal acts, threats, etc. He has also identified that ICLEI was affected by the pandemic. It can also be said that ICLEI was affected by the pandemic, mostly because it has been working remotely and this affected the dynamics of the projects, they started well and due to the virtuality issue the participation of the people was lost.

Magister. Fabian Bermeo

SAFE AND SOUND CITIES DIRECTOR

Questions	Answers
1. What is the Safe and sound cities project?	The Safe and Sound Cities Cuenca program is a project aimed at young people between the ages of 15 and 24, which seeks to create healthy and safe cities. This project is an initiative led by the Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation, in partnership with ICLEI. The implementation at the local level in Cuenca is led by the Implementing Consortium formed by Huasipichanga S.A.S., Fundación Integrar Cia. and Fundación Amaru, in collaboration with the GAD of Cuenca.
2. What are the main objectives of the project (and how do they contribute to the SDGs)?	The project is aimed at providing healthy and safe spaces for young people between the ages of 15 and 24, the objective is global, but it is working with intermediate cities such as Cuenca. ICLEI acts as a mediator between the municipalities and the international actors to make the projects viable and on the other hand, GIB (Global Infrastructure) is the organization that implements at a global level. They make an open call for those who can implement the program in Cuenca and then in Ambato; and Huasipichanga, which is an urban consultant, is responsible for working with public space and with young people in taking the initiative to implement the projects. This is why it can be said that the consortium, Huasipichanga, Integrar, and Amaru count on their allies such as GIB and ICLEI for the implementation of the projects in Cuenca, while in Ambato, for example, they count on their consortium and their allies.

<p>3. Has the project contributed to social responsibility and sustainable development?</p>	<p>Yes definitely, since we are working with many actors apart from the municipality because their work is social responsibility. We work with 4 local universities, one public and the others private, but the relationship is direct with the students. We also have institutions such as the CREA cooperative that support the implementation and begin to generate this social responsibility to link with the projects. We can also say that these institutions are already beginning to generate good results and show how important it is for them to be linked to the community.</p> <p>On the other hand, when we focus on sustainability issues, we will talk about the environment; through hackathons which are contests where a project is created to solve current problems and focus on promoting environmental sustainability, during these hackathons the children receive training in Amaru where they can see from another perspective environmental sustainability and how uncontrolled urbanization and planning affects the quality of life of citizens and what is achieved is to plant the concern of how to solve these needs of the community. And during the execution of these projects, we conclude that it is evident that the theme of sustainable development is becoming more and more important, especially among the new generations and the new administrations in our city.</p>
<p>4. What are the main results and achievements of the project so far?</p>	<p>The most important results of the project are the awareness that young people and citizens in general have acquired about the importance of sustainable development and also the awareness of the municipality to provide the necessary help and support for the execution of the projects; and what has been achieved with S2 Cities are the winning projects, which are about to be executed: "Bibliorio" and "Arteria", which meet the objective of creating inclusive urban environments.</p>
<p>5. What challenges and obstacles has the project faced?</p>	<p>One of the challenges is to understand public administrative processes and public bureaucracy; understanding these procedures and building networks with them has been a real challenge for us because if you don't get along with someone and don't have a relationship with entities or organizations it is unlikely that they will help you.</p>

Appendix 2

Matrix of category analysis applied to interviews

<p>Categories</p>	<p>Mg. Felipe Ochoa Director of International Relations Department</p>	<p>Mg. Javier Reyes ICLEI Representative in Ecuador</p>	<p>Mg. Fabian Bermeo Safe and Sound Cities Director</p>
<p>Social Responsibility</p>	<p>Within the city of Cuenca, the public sector is one of the most socially responsible, since all the projects that are carried out are aimed at the collective benefit. Even both public and private companies are restricted to benefit third parties if not directly to the community. But in a certain way the private sector has also contributed a good percentage to the social responsibility in Cuenca.</p>	<p>In terms of social responsibility, ICLEI, by working directly with the GADs of each region, will always have a very important impact on social responsibility issues, so the projects are focused on collective welfare.</p>	<p>We are working with many actors apart from the municipality because their work is social responsibility. We work with 4 local universities, one public and the others private, but the relationship is direct with the students. We also have institutions such as the CREA cooperative that support the implementation and begin to generate this social responsibility to link with the projects. We can also say that these institutions are already beginning to generate good results and show how important it is for them to be linked to the community.</p>

<p>Sustainable Development</p>	<p>Cuenca has always been characterized by the importance it has given to sustainable development, and therefore its public private sector has been one of the most important contributors to it; especially from its economic development as the city has a higher GDP per capita in Ecuador, on the other hand we have an excellent coverage of basic services such as: 99% of sewerage and drinking water, 80% waste management, 99% electricity coverage, among others. That is why as a city we have set as a goal to present the “Local Voluntary Report” with the objective that the city is taken into account in meeting the goals of the SDGs and the city will present prioritizing 4 of these goals which are: Gender equality (Goal 5), Clean water and sanitation (Goal 6), Decent work and economic growth (Goal 8), Sustainable cities and communities (Goal 11).</p>	<p>ICLEI always works with its partners in 5 lines that focus on sustainable development: low carbon, equitable, resilient and circular. Low carbon refers to support with greenhouse inventories, with resilient support with risk analysis for key cities of climate action; equitable refers to projects that should involve the community and circular refers to promoting the circular economy as sustainable production, community food systems, among others. So, ICLEI, being an international organization that promotes sustainability in local governments, helps the implementation of projects that support it. In the case of Cuenca there is the project “Safe and Sound cities” and “Emblematic Cities”, these are characterized as mentoring projects where they are accompanied by professional experts in international financing, which help with tips for better development of projects and that these can meet the SDGs.</p>	<p>By focusing on sustainability issues, we will talk about the environment; through hackathons that are contests where a project is created to solve current problems and focus on promoting environmental sustainability, during these hackathons the kids receive training in Amaru where they can see from another perspective environmental sustainability and how uncontrolled urbanization and planning affects the quality of life of citizens and what is achieved is to plant the concern of how to solve these needs of the collectivity. And during the execution of these projects, we conclude that it is evident that the theme of sustainable development is becoming more and more important, especially among the new generations and the new administrations in our city.</p>
<p>Inter-institutional Cooperation</p>	<p>Cuenca has been one of the cities of Ecuador, which has done better in terms of inter-institutional and international cooperation. Cuenca since 1999 became part of the organization of heritage cities and our mayor became president of this global network so the priority of the city has always been to establish contacts with international cooperation and what stands out about this is that it transcends between administrations.</p>	<p>In Cuenca there are three projects in cooperation with ICLEI, where Safe and Sound cities is the most important within the city as it involves several international entities from GIB (Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation), regional and local implementers as Huaspichanga and consortium implementers with are the key to destroy these projects; therefore, the cooperation of these entities and others are the key to the implementation of these projects.</p>	<p>One of the challenges is to understand public administrative processes and public bureaucracy; understanding these procedures and building networks with them has been a real challenge for us, because if you don't get along with someone and don't have relationships with entities or organizations it is unlikely that they will help you. others, because if you don't get along with someone and don't have a relationship with entities or organizations it is unlikely that they will help you.</p>
<p>Alliances</p>	<p>Alliances within the development of projects are fundamental, as well as inter-institutional and international cooperation. One of the most relevant alliances in the city of Cuenca that have influenced the implementation of projects is the network of cities and “United Cities and Governments” that function as a UN of cities, which, being large associations, are the ones that have helped us to be heard in multilateral forums and through them we have received funds for the implementation of projects.</p>	<p>ICLEI is a global network that has been active for 40 years, Cuenca joined the network in 2016, since then it has been working gradually and has been growing. In this way the need to generate national offices that are in charge of the different areas and are responsible for creating alliances and connections with international actors that help the implementation of projects grows. Therefore, alliances within ICLEI are fundamental to provide support to local governments.</p>	<p>Alliances are a fundamental issue for us, since through the implementing consortium we have been able to create alliances with many international entities who have helped us in terms of financing and technical assistance for the execution of the projects.</p>