

ECUADOR



Inclusive Education for All:  
Preventing School Dropout and  
Strengthening Child Protection in  
Esmeraldas



GOOD SHEPHERD  
INTERNATIONAL  
FOUNDATION  
ETS

**Project Title:** Inclusive Education for All: Preventing School Dropout and Strengthening Child Protection in Esmeraldas

**Country / Location:** Ecuador – La Cananga neighborhood, Esmeraldas

**Applicant:** GSIF ETS

**Implementing Organization:** Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd – Ecuador

**1. Context and Problem Statement**

Esmeraldas province has become one of the most violent areas in Ecuador due to organized crime, drug trafficking, and weakened state protection. Children grow up exposed to violence, poverty, and insecurity, significantly increasing the risk of school dropout, child labor, and recruitment by criminal groups.

Over the past five years, approximately 28,000 students dropped out of school in Esmeraldas. Poverty, learning gaps, fear, and the perception that education does not offer real opportunities contribute to school abandonment. At the same time, malnutrition and psychosocial distress undermine children’s learning capacity and well-being.

Children from low-income Afro-Ecuadorian families in La Cananga are particularly affected, facing intersecting risks that compromise their right to education, protection, and healthy development.

**KEY DATA**

- ▲ +500% homicides (last 2 years)
- ✖ 450 violent killings in 2024
- 🏠 28,000 school dropouts (5 years)
- ⚠️ 76.2% unmet basic needs
- 🔴 27.3% extreme poverty
- 👨👩 44% Afro-Ecuadorian population
- 👶👦 50 vulnerable children supported annually

**2. Theory of Change (ToC)**

If children at high risk of school dropout receive consistent academic support, **adequate daily nutrition**, and psychosocial care, and if families and communities strengthen their protective capacities, **then** children will remain in school, improve their academic performance, and develop resilience and life skills, **because** adequate nutrition is essential for cognitive development, attention span, regular school attendance, and children’s ability to fully benefit from educational support.

**3. Overall Objective**

To reduce school dropout and improve learning outcomes among vulnerable children in La Cananga by strengthening access to quality education, adequate daily nutrition, and psychosocial well-being, recognizing nutrition as a key determinant of children’s cognitive development, concentration, school attendance, and academic performance.

**4. Expected Results and Harmonized Indicators**

**Result 1 – Improved access to quality education and retention**

- **Indicator 1.1:** 50 children remain enrolled in the formal education system throughout the project period.
- **Indicator 1.2:** At least 80% of participating children show improved performance in core subjects.
- **Indicator 1.3:** 100% of participating children receive daily nutritious snacks, contributing to improved concentration, attendance, and learning capacity.

### **Result 2 – Strengthened psychosocial well-being and resilience**

- **Indicator 2.1:** 100% of children identified with psychosocial needs receive appropriate support.
- **Indicator 2.2:** At least 70% of children demonstrate improved socio-emotional skills (self-confidence, emotional regulation).
- **Indicator 2.3:** One functional girls’ empowerment group established and active.

### **Result 3 – Enhanced family and community protection systems**

- **Indicator 3.1:** 80% of parents/caregivers report improved parenting practices, including attention to children’s nutrition and well-being.
- **Indicator 3.2:** At least one community campaign on children’s rights conducted.
- **Indicator 3.3:** Minimum three partnerships established with local institutions.

## **5. Key Activities**

- Academic reinforcement and homework support
- Daily nutritious snacks
- Individual and group psychosocial support
- Recreational, sports, and leadership activities
- Parenting workshops and mothers’ self-help group
- Community awareness campaign and staff capacity building

## **6. Target Groups**

### **Direct:**

- 50 girls and boys (7–12 years)
- 38 parents/caregivers
- 5 staff members

### **Indirect:**

- Approx. 450 community members

## 7. Duration and Budget

- Duration: 12 months
- Total annual budget: EUR 45,000
- Requested: EUR 25,000