



Founded in 2012, UOPROCAE is an association of 5 grassroots organizations with more than 460 producers, 21% of whom are women. UOPROCAE aggregates and markets the produce of its members to international customers. Major clients include global distributors of ethically-sourced organic products such as Imlak’esh Organics and Uncommon Cacao. Together they are cultivating 1,370 hectares of cocoa and produce 337 metric tons per year.

UOPROCAE boasts of its product quality characterized by its fine and floral aroma. By linking the farmers to the international community and training them to get organic and fair-trade certification, they generate 4,250 direct jobs distributed in 5 locations in Esmeraldas and improve income of grassroot producers by up to 40%.

Association	Location
APROCA	Atacames
APROCAM	Muisine
ECOCACAO	Atacames
APROCAR	Rio Verde
ASOPROARONES	Esmeraldas

Figure 1 UOPROCAE and its member associations

## IMPACT OVERVIEW

Ecological diversity around cacao plantation in Esmeraldas Ecuador; Increased income of grassroots organization from the sale of fine cocoa

No. of beneficiaries	453 members
% Women	21%
Areas conserved	800 ha

## COMMUNITY

	<b>Country</b>	Ecuador
	<b>Municipalities</b>	Esmeraldas
	<b>Communities</b>	Chachi, Afro-descendientes

**Impact Background**

UOPROCAE sources from counties in the Esmeraldas, a northern province of Ecuador. Despite hosting the largest oil refinery and largest oil-exporting port in the country, Esmeraldas is one of the country’s poorest provinces with 40.6% of its population living in poverty<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, the oil refinery industry did not translate to meaningful employment for the residents of the province since most of the skilled workers are imported from other states or abroad.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 2 Mache Chindul Ecological Reserve. Photo accessed from [www.planetandes.com](http://www.planetandes.com)

Esmeraldas is also commonly referred to as the Green Province, thanks to its diverse flora and fauna. It is home to several protected ecological reserves such as the Cotacachi-Cayapas Park, the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve, and the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve. Unfortunately, these protected forests and their surrounding areas have been severely depleted over the last two decades. According to Global Forest Watch, Esmeraldas was responsible for 13% of Ecuador’s total tree cover loss since 2000.<sup>3</sup> A major driver of this deforestation is the entrance of palm oil plantations since 1998. In a 2017 national census, 125,000 hectares, or half of the total area planted with African palm planted in Ecuador, are in Esmeraldas.<sup>4</sup>

**Impact Delivery**

UOPROCAE, through its member organizations, encourages its farmers to maintain diverse ecology around its cacao trees. Doing this not only improves the health of the soil and promotes productivity for the trees, but also encourages better flavor and aroma in the final product. The cacao trees receive shade from banana, orange, mango, and laurel trees, among others. The cocoa is generally cultivated in areas between 2 to 4 hectares, and the farmers can produce up to 730 MT of dry cocoa beans per year. This translates to annual sales of about \$2,000 dollars.

UOPROCAE’s primary service to its member organizations is to aggregate their produce and link them to international and premium-paying customers. It also dries and ferments the beans for 2 of its organizations that do not have the facilities for drying their produce properly. Furthermore, UOPROCAE has agronomists visiting each of these farms to advise them on cultivation and support farmers in successfully complying with organic standards.

**Outcome**

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Improvement of livelihood</i>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increases the income of local communities by linking farmers’ produce to the global market and improving farm productivity</li> <li>▪ Professionalizes grassroots organizations through organic and fair-trade certifications</li> <li>▪ Upskills organizations in terms of accounting and general management</li> </ul>   |
| <i>Environmental preservation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trains the communities on sustainable agricultural practices and gives technical assistance on how to enhance productivity through agro-ecological techniques</li> <li>▪ Incentivizes conservation of the protected areas, specifically the Mache-Chindul Ecological Reserve and the Galera San Francisco Marine Reserve, by reaching and expanding the market for sustainably-sourced products</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> [Tasa De Pobreza Por Ingresos \(inclusion.gob.ec\)](http://Tasa De Pobreza Por Ingresos (inclusion.gob.ec))  
<sup>2</sup> [Toxicity and Informal Living in Esmeraldas, Ecuador - Maricarmen Hernández, 2021](http://Toxicity and Informal Living in Esmeraldas, Ecuador - Maricarmen Hernández, 2021)  
<sup>3</sup> [Ecuador Deforestation Rates & Statistics | GFW \(globalforestwatch.org\)](http://Ecuador Deforestation Rates & Statistics | GFW (globalforestwatch.org))  
<sup>4</sup> [Esmeraldas: la selva agoniza en los confines del Ecuador | Plan V](http://Esmeraldas: la selva agoniza en los confines del Ecuador | Plan V)