

International Forum for Sustainable Asia and the Pacific Thematic Tracks (TT-5)

Applying SEPLS to OECMs: From Concept to Real-World Impact

5 October 2026

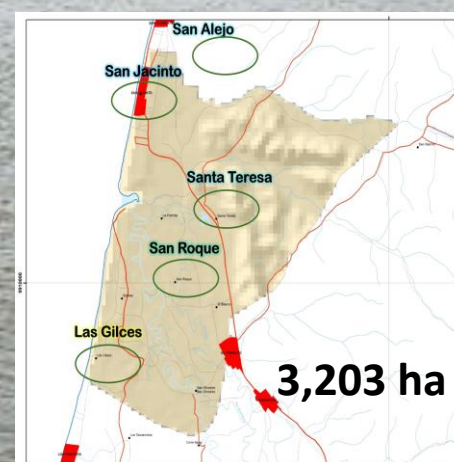
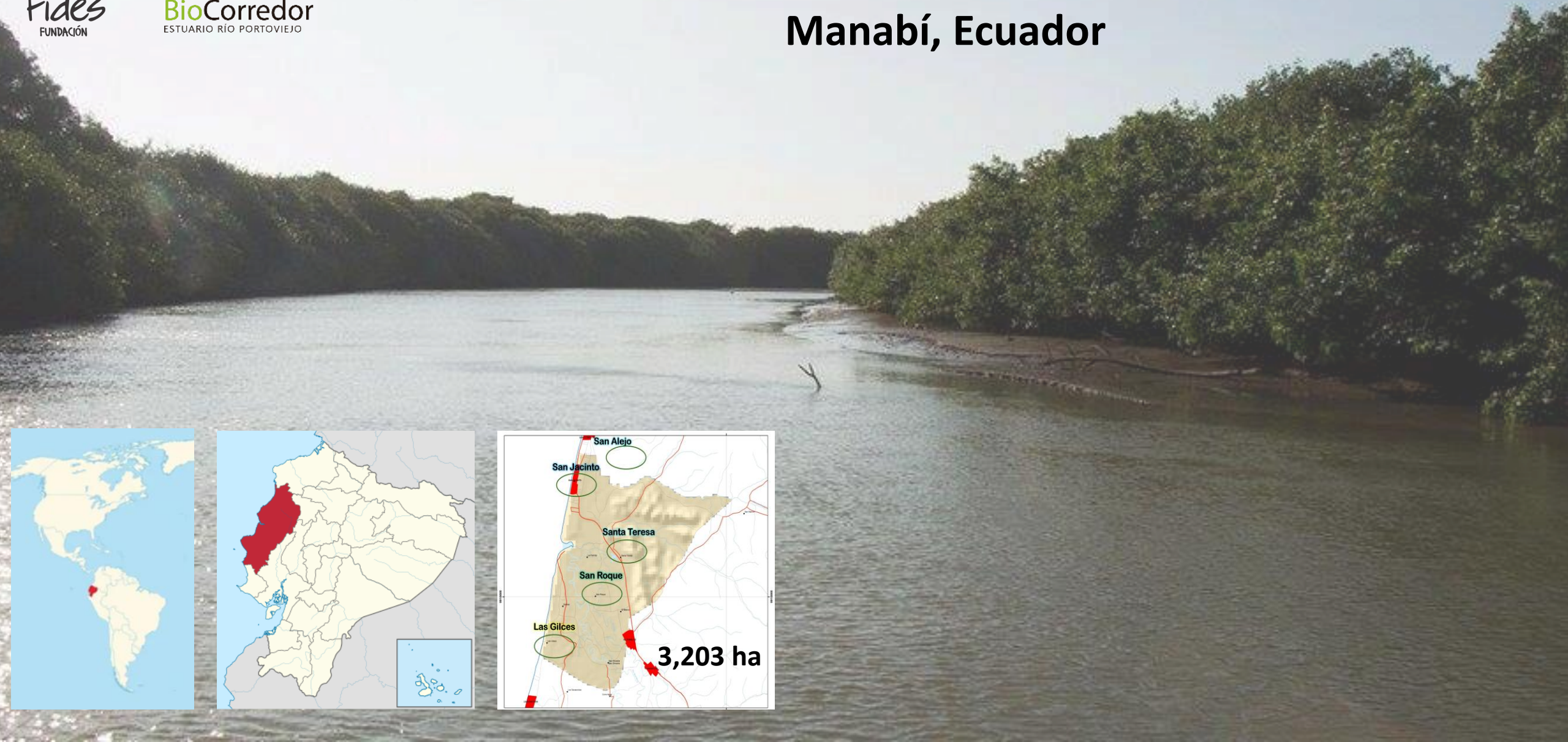




THIS IS OUR TERRITORY:

Portoviejo River Estuary Biocorridor

Manabí, Ecuador



THE BIOCORRIDOR: CONNECTING ECOSYSTEMS, PRODUCTION AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

ecological connectivity



sustainable production landscapes



collective action and governance



Since 2012: a territorial strategy built around three interconnected components

WHY CAN THIS TERRITORY BE UNDERSTOOD THROUGH A SEPLS LENS?

In the Portoviejo River Estuary, we find::

SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL MOSAIC

Mangroves, river, estuary, dry forest, beaches, dunes, salt-production areas, agricultural land and communities.

PRODUCTION AND LIVELIHOODS

Ecological rice farming, artisanal salt production, fishing and tourism linked to the functioning of the landscape.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES

Sustainable production and management practices developed by local communities.

COLLECTIVE ACTION AND GOVERNANCE

Five communities, four producer organizations, and territorial coordination mechanisms: the Community Environmental Coordinating Body and the Biocorridor Working Group.



FROM COLLECTIVE ACTION TO THE COMMUNITY ACUS

More than a decade of building territorial governance and conservation



2012

Portoviejo River Estuary Biocorridor

Ecological connectivity + sustainable production
+ collective action

Community Environmental Coordinating Body

Established initially by four communities and
later expanded.

Biocorridor Working Group (BWG)

Coordination among communities, institutions
and other stakeholders.

BIOCORREDOR ≈ 3,203 ha

Broader socio-ecological landscape

28 April 2022 Declaration of the Portoviejo River
Estuary Community Conservation and Sustainable Use
Area (ACUS)

March 2024

Legal recognition of the ACUS through an ordinance
issued by the Provincial Government.

Strengthening of the Community Environmental Coordinating Body and the Biocorridor Working Group.

ACUS ≈ 238.89 ha

A specific territorial conservation strategy for sensitive
ecosystems within the Biocorridor.

SDM: STRENGTHENING AN ONGOING TERRITORIAL PROCESS

AREA 1 — GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

8 formal community coordination meetings

2 Biocorridor Working Group meetings



AREA 2 — MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

3 community rangers trained

9 months of patrol activities within the ACUS



AREA 3 — CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION

7 olive ridley sea turtle nests supported/protected

40 ha of ecological rice farming maintained in the buffer zone



A scenic view of a mangrove forest. In the foreground, the dense, tangled roots of mangrove trees extend into the water. A small, light-colored boat is visible on the water in the middle ground. The background shows more mangrove trees and a clear sky. The text 'FROM CONSERVATION TO DEMONSTRATING CONSERVATION: THE OECM CHALLENGE' is overlaid in white, bold, uppercase letters in the top right corner.

FROM CONSERVATION TO DEMONSTRATING CONSERVATION: THE OECM CHALLENGE

WHERE? A clearly defined area

Territorial boundaries and spatial coherence

WHO HOLDS RIGHTS? Tenure and rights over the area

Ownership, possession, use or usufruct rights

WHO MAKES DECISIONS AND PARTICIPATES? Legitimate governance

Stakeholders, responsibilities, participation and agreements

HOW IS THE AREA MANAGED? Effective management

Management tools, actions, monitoring and responses to threats

WHAT OUTCOMES DOES IT DELIVER? In situ conservation

Positive and sustained biodiversity conservation outcomes

THE FIRST OECD APPLICATION: THREE GAPS THAT BECAME LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

1. DELINEATION AND ECOLOGICAL CHARACTERIZATION

Authority's assessment: 65% was classified as areas without natural ecosystems. The assessment refers to 156.91 ha as areas without natural ecosystems, within an ACUS with a total area of 238.89 ha.

Current documentation: The ACUS is characterized as a mosaic comprising: Mangroves (50.94 ha), Beaches and dunes (96.91 ha), Estuary (30.38 ha) Dry forest (19.06 ha) Artisanal salt-production areas (41.60 ha)

Lesson learned: Strengthen the cartographic evidence and demonstrate the ecological function of each component.

2. TENURE

Rights and the proposed area needed to be precisely aligned. The documentation submitted did not sufficiently demonstrate ownership, possession, use or usufruct rights across the entire proposed area.

Lesson learned: Link each part of the proposed area to the relevant rights holders and verifiable supporting documentation.



THE FIRST OEMC APPLICATION: THREE GAPS THAT BECAME LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



3. GOVERNANCE

Existing governance needed to be demonstrated for the specific area. The authority requested stronger evidence of participation, rights holders and explicit agreements.

Current documentation: The Community Environmental Coordinating Body now has legal status.

Lesson learned: Document who makes decisions, who participates, and how agreements are reached.

FROM OBSERVATIONS TO A STRENGTHENING AGENDA

01 — TERRITORY

Review and validate the proposed boundary

Cross-check the delineation against ecosystems, land uses, ecological connectivity and cartographic information.

02 — ECOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Demonstrate how the landscape functions

Document biodiversity, habitats and the ecological functions of mangroves, the estuary, beaches, dry forest and artisanal salt-production areas.

03 — TENURE

Connect rights to the territory

Link each part of the proposed area to verifiable evidence of ownership, possession, use or usufruct rights.

04 — GOVERNANCE

Make decision-making processes visible

Document stakeholders, participation, responsibilities, agreements and coordination mechanisms.



WHY IS OECD RECOGNITION IMPORTANT?

These sensitive ecosystems face external pressures that community-based conservation alone cannot fully address.



MANGROVES: Habitat, biodiversity and estuarine connectivity

Pressures: Shrimp farming and urban expansion



BEACHES AND DUNES: Coastal habitats and sea turtle nesting areas

Pressure: Sand extraction



ARTISANAL SALT-PRODUCTION AREAS: Traditional production, biodiversity and ecological connectivity

Pressure: Urban expansion

The Portoviejo River Estuary provides habitat for sea turtles and birds, reinforcing the conservation value of this coastal-estuarine mosaic.



GRACIAS!

