UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

# Ecuador
## Operational Update

N.4 | September 2023

*It was thanks to her family that Kassandra became a distinguished violinist in her country. Her father was her first teacher, and she learned a lot from him.*
*Photo: UNHCR/Omar Ganchala*

## *Figures at a glance*

### *Population figures*

**75,803**
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

**95%** from neighbouring Colombia

**62,217**
refugees with active cases registered in ProGres[1]

### *Our 2023 response in figures*

**136,880**
refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of September 2023

**76M**
**required in 2023**

- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

For more information on funding, please visit
reporting.unhcr.org/ecuador

**48,928**
people received legal guidance & assistance

**17,597**
people assisted with cash for basic needs & protection

**10,565**
people supported with collective emergency shelter

**537**
people provided with technical or skills certification

**661**
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

**14,150**
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

**27,191**
people received hygiene kits

**2,407**
GBV survivors supported

1 Historical figure registered by the government to the end of August 2023. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of August 2023.

## Operational context

The regularization process continues in Ecuador, with people continuing to apply for their visa despite several technical issues in the online procedures. UNHCR, partners and other UN agencies and programmes continue to support the process (see page 3 for more details).

According to the results of the National Census conducted in 2022, there are 16.9 million of Ecuadorians, lower than the 18 million that the statistics institute estimated. According to the institute, this could relate to lower births, the deaths caused by the pandemic and the exit of Ecuadorians heading north. The census also revealed that around 425.000 foreigners live in Ecuador, which represents the 2.5% of the total population. This number only people who have affirmed their intention to stay in the country for 6 months or more.

Population movements to and through Ecuador continue, with an increasing trend of people joining mixed movements, mainly on buses. While the majority of people on the move to and through Ecuador continue to be Venezuelan, UNHCR and partners note an increasing trend in people from Colombia, Haiti and countries in Asia, as well as Ecuadorians heading north.

The Government raised the El Niño alert from yellow to orange, shifting from prevention to preparedness. UNHCR, as part of the Humanitarian Country Team, is helping come up with a contingency and response plan in collaboration with local and national authorities, while also sharing information to refugees and their host community on how to stay safe.

See: **Forced displacement to Ecuador, national trends report**

Ecuador continues to be at the center of multiple and simultaneous human displacements, whose mobility towards the south and north of the continent remains complex. In addition to being a destination country for one of the highest numbers of refugees in Latin America and home to the fourth highest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, it is also the transit country for people from other continents. This adds to the thousands of Ecuadorians leaving, largely due to the general deterioration of Ecuador's socioeconomic situation. Read the report here.

## Main populations forced to flee hosted by Ecuador

### Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 31,297 people entered Ecuador in September 2023, with a daily entry average of 1,043 Venezuelans. This represents a 10% decrease as compared to the same period in 2022. A similar number exited the country during the reporting period.

**474,945** Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador[2]

**45%** estimated to be between 18 and 45 years old[3]

**25%** estimated to have a higher education degree[3]

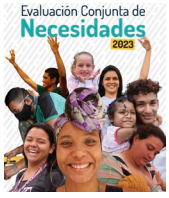
#### Main needs

**82%** access to food[3]

**67%** access to housing or shelter[3]

**57%** access to livelihoods or employment[3]

See: **Even with significant improvements in access to rights for refugees and migrants in Ecuador, they face significant barriers to their integration**




The Working Group on Refugees and Migrants (GTRM), co-led by UNHCR and IOM, launched the Joint Need Assessment (JNA) in Ecuador. The report, based on 2.541 surveys, concluded that 1 in 4 people in human mobility surveyed in Ecuador have a high education degree, while the 80 per cent of the population of working age is economically active - 76 per cent of whom have some type of employment. Read more.

### Colombians

4,057 Colombians were registered in need of international protection so far in 2023, 547 in September, 72% of whom were families with children. This accounts for an 18% increase as compared to the same period in 2022.

**3,510** Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2023[2]

**2,825** were registered between March and August

#### Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

**81%** access to food, housing, clothing[4]

**12%** access to employment and services[4]

**5%** access to documentation[4]

2 According to data estimated by the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish). The GTRM is assessing a new methodology with the Government to estimate the new stock figure.
3 Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info
4 2022 Protection Monitoring available at our data portal

# SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

The broad Registration and Regularization exercise has been key in enabling the needs of refugees and migrants in an irregular status to be met and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socioeconomic integration strategy.

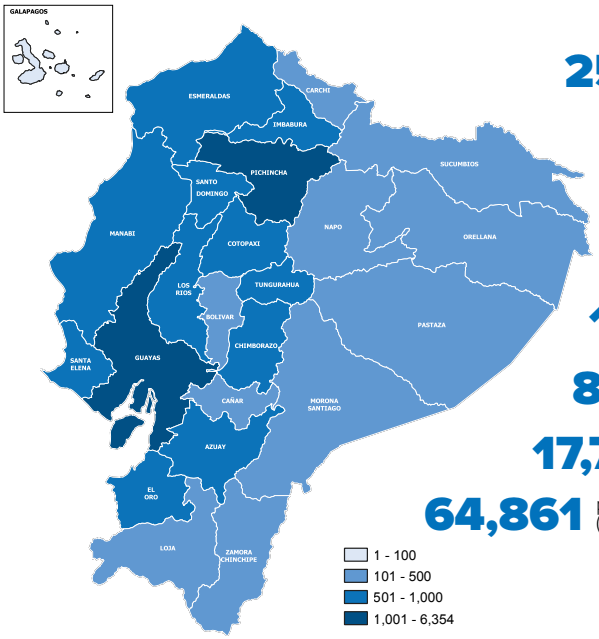
As provided by Decree 436/22, the first phase of the Registration and Regularization initiative started in 2022, with the registration of foreigners living in Ecuador with an irregular status, together with the opportunity for them to obtain a temporary stay permit (Certificado de Permanencia Migratoria) that allows for a regular stay in the territory until a regularization option is made available.

The first phase of registration started registering and regularizing all Venezuelans who entered regularly prior to the issuance of the Decree with a VIRTE visa. Registration is also divided in phases: first, Venezuelans who entered regularly beginning on 1 September 2022; second, people of all nationalities as of 16 November 2022; and third, all Venezuelans who entered irregularly beginning on 17 February 2023. The registration phase ended on 15 August.

Regularization of Venezuelans who entered regularly began on 1 October, while the process for other foreigners began on 12 July. By 20 October 2023, 118,841 visa applications had been lodged, 82,750 visas had been granted and 64,861 ID cards had been delivered. Registration ended on 15 August, with 248,416 people having appointments for their biometric registration and over 201,708 people who have a stay permit, by 20 October.

## Province of residence per VIRTE visa applicant

Source MDI




**259,084** people registered through the official website (source: MDI)

**248,416** people with appointments for biometric registration (source: MDI)

**201,708** people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

**118,841** VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

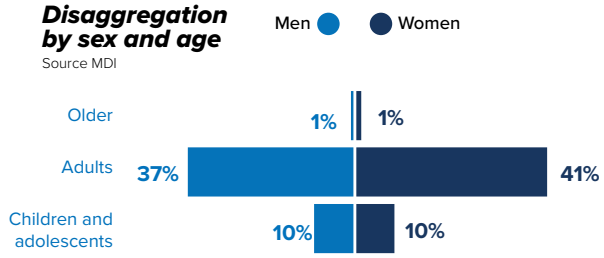
**82,750** people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

**17,717** pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

**64,861** people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

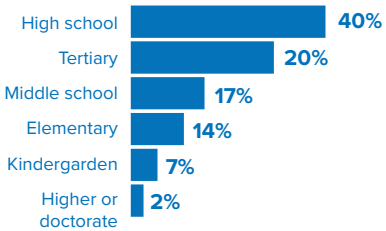
## Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI




## Last education level achieved

Source MDI




## Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

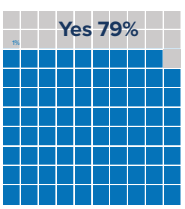
Source MDI

**24** MIES **70** MREMH **79** MDI

## Desire to stay

Do you wish to stay in Ecuador permanently (over two years)?

Source MDI




*This infographic was created jointly by UNHCR and IOM, co-leads of the Interagency Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) providing technical support to the government in carrying out the regularization process in Ecuador. This infographic was created with information provided by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility to 20 October 2023.*

NATIONAL

## How UNHCR has supported the regularization process

UNHCR and partners continue providing support to the regularization process with counselling and guidance, communications with communities, cash for documentation, as well as key staff in government institutions and brigades to support registration and any other related procedure. So far in 2023, 80,949 people have been supported in the process.

## UNHCR and AÉROPOSTALE launch art contest to promote support for refugees in Ecuador

Titled 'Hope Away From Home: A World of Possibilities in Ecuador', this contest invites children and young people between the ages of 10 and 30 to let their creativity fly and contribute with a design or illustration that promotes support and awareness towards refugees. Learn more and share.

# DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

## Shelters and safe houses provide protection to thousands of families

In **Lago Agrio and Manta**, UNHCR, in the framework of the GTRM and in coordination with the risk Management Secretariat, certified frontline workers in "Temporary Accommodation Management". This management will strengthen the immediate capacity to provide safe services within these spaces to all people who need them. In **Bolívar**, together with the local government, UNHCR delivered the Unit for the Protection of Rights to provide comprehensive care to people in vulnerable situations and strengthen their integration. Now, Bolívar has a place dedicated to the promotion and protection of rights.

NATIONAL

## Trainings and workshops that strengthen the protection of communities

In **Mira,** with the support of the Consejo Cantonal de Protección de Derechos, 12 officials of Red de Protección de Derechos completed the training on Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence. In **Bolívar,** UNHCR finished training 30 municipal officials on tools to promote inclusion, non-discrimination, and diversity in all spaces. On the other hand, 90 members of the security staff of the **Ambato** GAD participated in training sessions on international protection, rights, and community services available to all people. This support will ease timely information delivery to those who need it most. In **Tulcán**, 15 officials of the Policía Nacional del Ecuador were trained to coordinate actions in the care and response to refugees and people in a situation of human mobility. These workshops are part of the Police Human Rights programme.

# PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

MANTA

## 'Casa de la Mujer' a space to access basic services for women at risk

The Municipality of Manta, with the support of UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, officially inaugurated the facilities of the "Casa de la Mujer". This is a specialized and comprehensive care space that offers accommodation and promotes the protection of refugee and migrant women, women at risk of gender-based violence and at risk of vulnerability. In addition, this place has a coworking area where entrepreneurship training workshops are offered with the aim of strengthening their capacities and promoting their economic independence.

NATIONAL

## UNHCR promotes the integration of children and adolescents in schools

As part of the Multi-Year Resilience Programme, UNHCR aims to facilitate access to education for refugee children and adolescents who are out of the educational system.

Through a coordinated effort with partners, UNHCR identified refugee and migrant children and adolescents and those from the host community who had dropped out of the educational system in Ibarra, Tulcán, Manta, Guayaquil, Machala and Huaquillas. To provide them with support in their reintegration to school, UNHCR and partners supports their enrollment in schools close to home, delivered educational kits and, when necessary, provided financial support to promote their permanence in the educational system. Thanks to the support of Education Cannot Wait and the Embassy of Canada, a total of 2,654 kits have been delivered, 473 for early childhood education, 1,849 for basic education and 332 for high school.

NATIONAL

## Strengthening the capacity to provide access to basic services for people forced to flee

UNHCR is working to strengthen the capacity of spaces that offer basic services to people on the move in Ecuador.

In **Santo Domingo,** UNHCR supported improvements to the emergency area of the Augusto Egas Health Centre, which serves both the local population as well as refugees and migrants. These improvements included remodeling the waiting room, first aid room, and residential areas.

In **Quito,** UNHCR supported improvements to the infrastructure of the “La Casa del Hermano” shelter of the San José Patronato. These improvements included providing recycling bins, portable sinks, and other equipment.

NATIONAL

## Early HIV response can save lives

In **Tulcán,** 32 health care workers strengthened their skills in HIV care and response thanks to the support of UNHCR and Corporación Kimirina, through UNAIDS funding. The training will improve comprehensive health care with a focus on human rights and standards to provide care without stigma or discrimination. In addition, prevention kits were delivered to people involved in sex work dynamics, and in **Ibarra and Otavalo,** workshops were launched in the framework of Respiramos Inclusión for officials from the Priorato Health Centre who will receive tools for good treatment, inclusion, and non-discrimination in the provision of health services to people who engage in sex work. Health is a right of all people to ensure their well-being and integrity.

# PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

NATIONAL

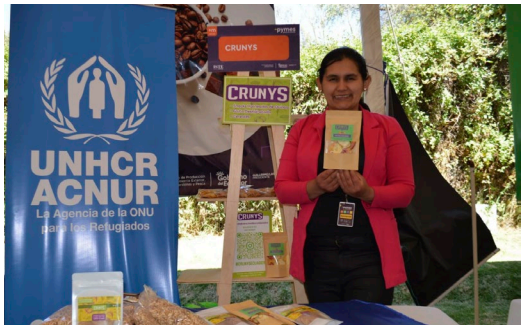
## Training is an opportunity to improve employability

UNHCR, together with partners and the private sector, trained around 100 refugees and Ecuadorians to promote their employability. In Quito, six refugees and Ecuadorians who participated in the customer service, cooking, and bakery trainings received their certificates with the support of AVSI. Three of them got jobs after completing the training. Another 32 received their Labour Competency Certification with the support of Fudela.

On the other hand, in Ambato, UNHCR and Megakons held a series of workshops on hardware stores management and construction aimed at refugees and Ecuadorians to help them acquire knowledge in this industrial sector and on sales to improve their opportunities of getting hired. Over 50 people participated.

NATIONAL

## Fairs promote the integration of refugees and the development of host communities




Through innovative products and gastronomy, refugees and other forcibly displaced people can integrate into their host communities by sharing their knowledge, culture, building support networks, and promoting friendships. In **Ambato,** 21 refugee and Ecuadorian entrepreneurs supported by UNHCR participated in the '+PYMES para el mundo, edición Chakra' fair to promote their products and find new customers. More than 2,000 people visited the fair, where they could find food as well as cosmetics and beauty products. In **Cuenca,** UNHCR, its partners, and the Economic Development Municipal Company of Cuenca (EDEC-EP) held a gastronomic fair with the participation of 30 entrepreneurs from Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador.

NATIONAL

## Financial education helps refugees become self-sufficient

Having a proper financial management allows refugees and Ecuadorians to better manage their resources and, thus improve their socio-economic integration. In the **province of Imbabura**, UNHCR and partners held a series of workshops in different cities focused on financial education for young people with the aim of helping them learn savings methods and budgeting. This is of vital importance, as these young people are part of entrepreneurship schools that seek to graduate their participants with a clear business idea that will allow them to generate resources for themselves and their families. They have also been trained in environmental impact, storytelling, packaging, and business plans.

# CLIMATE ACTION

LAGO AGRIO

## Community gardens, an integrating and recreational activity

In Lago Agrio, UNHCR finished training refugees and ecuadorians on urban gardens, together with Fudela and the Crecermas Technological Institute. In the workshops, the community learned about the benefits and tools needed to carry out this activity, different designs, types of cultivation, and soil preparation methods to preserve ecosystems. They also learned how to generate autonomy in communities to harvest their own products, maintain a healthy and sustainable diet with the environment.

QUITO

## Creating sustainable spaces with the planet

In Quito, UNHCR made improvements to the infrastructure of La Casa del Hermano Shelter from Patronato San José. UNHCR also delivered portable sinks and differentiated trash bins to promote a recycling culture. UNHCR is also promoting environmental education at safe spaces that are intended for refugees and their host communities. These spaces include the community gardens at Museos de la Ciudad, a space intervened by UNHCR and partners. Through puppets and marionettes, the gardens explain the importance of this activity for the community.

AMBATO

## Green entrepreneurship

Emprende Verde is a programme that seeks to help refugee and forcibly displaced people and Ecuadorians learn about circular economy strategies, waste recycling, and innovation techniques for their businesses. This will help to minimize waste in the use of natural resources and reduce environmental impact to a minimum, in order to achieve a continuous cycle of material reuse. Thanks to the support of the Corporación de Desarrollo de Ambato y Tungurahua, these activities are now a reality.

## PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

### Promoting the inclusion of refugees through football

UNHCR and Sociedad Deportiva Aucas organized the 'Integration Match: Together for a World of Possibilities.' This football match took place at Gonzalo Pozo Ripalda Stadium in Quito and featured the participation of 60 refugees, young members of their host communities, and players from the club's Main, Youth, and Women's teams.

Through these events, UNHCR and Aucas are using the power of football to promote the rights and integration of refugees with their host communities in Ecuador., while strengthening the protection of refugees in the country.

ESMERALDAS

### In a World of Possibilities, every voice matters

UNHCR and the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressi are working closely to strengthen community spaces in Esmeraldas. As part of this valuable initiative, a communication workshop was held to share knowledge on the construction of communication products and the production of podcast for the "Jóvenes Construyendo Futuro" (Young People Building the Future) who reside in San Lorenzo. As a result of this experience, they are creating a youth forum, known as KLK, which will be launched at the end of October.

HUACA

### Refugee and migrant children strengthen ties with their community through summer activities

The Autonomous Decentralized Government of San Pedro de Huaca, with the support of UNHCR and FUDELA, organized summer activities open to the community during the school holidays. In these spaces, 30 refugee and migrant children, part of the "Community Champions" programme, participated in recreational and educational activitiesm including football matches, attended painting and art workshops, and went on a friendship walk with more than 200 children from their host community.

# Kassandra's violin is a powerful tool for integration

*Kassandra is now first violin at Orquesta Joven del Ecuador.*
*Photo: UNHCR/Diana Díaz Rodríguez*

**QUITO**

Kassandra has been living in Ecuador for 6 years. Being here, practicing her profession as a musician, is almost coincidental. She left native Barinas with the hopes of getting a job that had been offered to her in Peru. But the idea of leaving Venezuela had already been in her head, struggling as she had been back home, but the offer convinced her. After crossing Venezuela and Colombia by land, she arrived in Ecuador, and it was here that she found out that the job offer was fake. With few options in sight, she decided to stay in Ecuador and start over.

"At the beginning, I didn't work in music. I had some jobs, I did things I had never done before. I had to sell some things I had", says Kassandra. Music, at that time, was not an option for her.

It was thanks to her family that Kassandra became a distinguished violinist in her country. Her father was her first teacher, and she learned a lot from him. With these tools, and despite the adversities she faced due to displacement, Kassandra auditioned for the Orquesta Joven del Ecuador...and was selected. Thanks to her talent and to the opportunity that music gave her, Kassandra's integration in Ecuador was more bearable.

"In Orquesta Joven del Ecuador, I feel we are really integrating. It is the positive side of integration between culture and countries," said Kassandra. "I have learned so much and felt accompanied in this process. When I arrived, I was alone, I was not with my family. They -her colleagues- made me feel at home, very special, very loved, and we have learned so much."

Music is a universal language. Through sounds, people can get to know and listen to each other, interact, and generate support networks. Now, Kassandra travels the stages as the first violinist of the Orchestra. She never thought that after all that happened, the music career she had started back home would continue in Ecuador. "Music has given me spiritual richness. It has given me the power to connect with people, to feel loved, and to feel that I can help others just by playing music. It makes me feel that I can change the life of others with sounds, with my art," she concludes.

**You can help people like Kassandra who had to leave their homes and now dream of rebuilding their lives. Donate now.**

## We thank the contributions of our donors

4 October 2023

***UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding.***

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