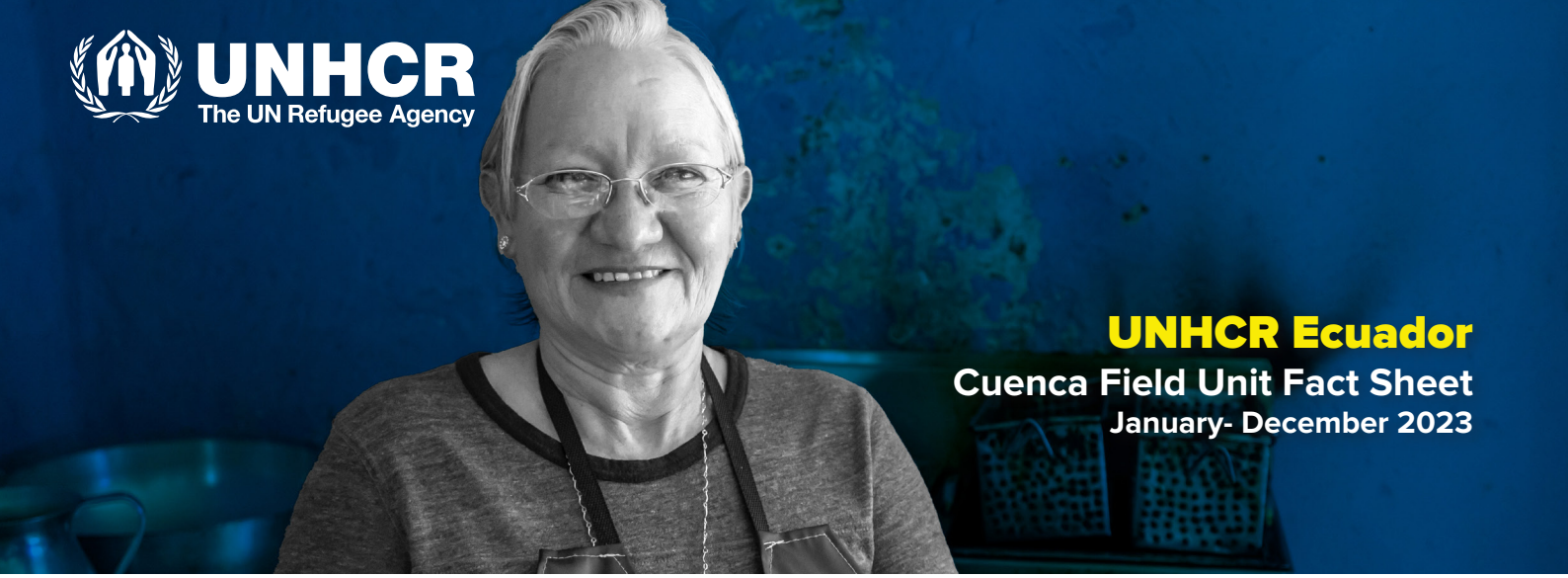


UNHCR Ecuador
Cuenca Field Unit Fact Sheet
January- December 2023

Operational context

UNHCR Cuenca Field Unit (FUCU) is located in the city of Cuenca, covering a total of five provinces: Azuay, Cañar, Loja, Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe. It was opened between 2007 and 2016, attending Colombian refugees. After 3 years closed, in 2019 UNHCR reopened this office due to the increase of Venezuelan refugee and migrants arrivals, becoming the fifth city with the largest Venezuelan population in the Ecuadorian territory.

Zapotillo and Macará, border towns, are currently transit points for refugees and migrants on their way to and from Peru to various destinations in Ecuador and other countries.

The protection strategy prioritizes direct engagement with the population through face-to-face counseling, interviews, and a dedicated helpline. Collaboration with AVSI focuses on the Posada San Francisco temporary housing project, offering emergency shelter. Meanwhile, strengthening the local protection system is key. Processes have been improved and coordination spaces like the Child Protection abd GT-WAN Subgroups have been created, as well as the Case Management Board. Additionally, UNHCR monitors and accompanies HIAS's implementation of the MYRP, ensuring comprehensive support for refugee, migrant and local population.

Recognizing the evolving needs, UNHCR has adjusted its approach since 2022, considering Cuenca and Loja as primary host cities rather than solely transit centers, which provide shelter and stability for people entering Ecuador.

Key figures:

During 2023* UNHCR and its partners delivered

- **917** Hygiene kits
- **343** Baby kits
- **40** entrepreneurs trained
- **9** Job vacancies covered by refugees
- **145** entrepreneurs in fairs and events

Total refugees and migrants*

4,186

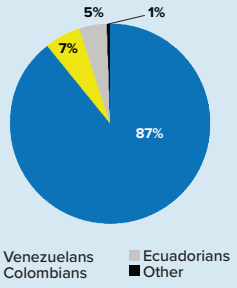
Registered by UNHCR and partners (HIAS and NRC) in Cuenca, and Plan International in Loja through proGres V4.

Venezuelans and others in need living in area of coverage

32,890*

The fifth area hosting the largest concentration number of Venezuelans in the country.

Distribution by nationality



UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding so far in 2023.

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

UNHCR Ecuador is also grateful for the support from private donors, including Private donors in Australia, Italy, Germany, Japan, Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, the Swedish Postcode Lottery and USA.

Working with partners

UNHCR undertakes protection, community-based and durable solutions programmes directly and through partners. In partnership with AVSI, HIAS, NRC and Plan International, UNHCR provides a comprehensive protection response focused on humanitarian support, legal assistance, sheltering and housing, livelihoods, protection for LGBTIQ+ people, children and adolescents, as well as community initiatives that promote local integration.

UNHCR also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Public Defender's Office and the Cantonal Boards for the Protection of Rights. Moreover, UNHCR co-leads the local Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) to coordinate inter-agency responses.

Key activities

Protection

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities during 2023:

- Promoting the practice of sports like softball and Ultimate Frisbee in Cuenca, as community protection strategy in partnership with AVSI, fostering social integration and peaceful coexistence.
- Strengthening local protection systems to facilitate the population's access to their rights. In partnership with Plan International, UNHCR promoted the potential of girls and adolescents through the Leadership Schools and the implementation of Community Protection Mechanisms in the neighborhoods of Miraflores and Jipiro Paraíso (Loja), and in the Pindal city. Periodic monitoring is also carried out with Plan International on the southern border (Macará and Zapotillo).
- Socialization of the Comprehensive Care Protocol and its migration regularization process for UASC, to all actors of the protection system in Cuenca, as well as monitoring its application through HIAS and MIES.
- Implementation of direct registration. This strategy proved effective in bringing people closer to UNHCR, resulting in a proactive response to protection alerts and the identification of potential resettlement cases.

Education

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities during 2023:

- Provinding knowledge to adolescents about teenage pregnancy prevention and equipping teachers from 10 educational institutions with self-care practices, in partnership with HIAS, under the MYRP (Multi-Year Resilience Program for Educational Inclusion).

Coordination

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities during 2023:

- Supporting of the following subgroups: Legal Protection, Child Protection, Livelihoods, GT-WAN, and Education.

Livelihoods and economic inclusion

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities during 2023:

- CV clinic workshops for people in human mobility and locals, fostering their active participation in job fairs through a partnership with AVSI and HIAS. This initiative aimed to enhance their access to the labor market.
- Consultancy training with the Circular Economy research Group of the University of Cuenca, in which technicians from EDEC EP, AVSI and UNHCR were trained in circular economy. Subsequently, a workshop replicating this training was delivered to entrepreneurs, enabling them to secure eco-innovative seed capital.
- Training in business plans and promotion of entrepreneur fairs for refugees and local population in partnership with EDEC EP.
- Supporting business formalization by assisting entrepreneurs in obtaining sanitary notifications.
- Training refugees and migrants on hotel managing in partnership with Selina and Oro Verde hotels.
- Financial education workshops and opening of savings accounts at the Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Jardín Azuayo with the support of HIAS.
- Five companies based in Cuenca received the "Sello Empresa Inclusiva" recognition.

Shelter

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities during 2023:

- Providing emergency shelter services to a monthly average of 30 new arrivals, displaced people from other cities, and those in transit, in coordination with Posada San Francisco, as part of the partnership with AVSI.
- Strengthening the case management and shelter services model af Posada San Francisco.
- Establishing a 'friendly space' at Posada San Francisco shelter, where children and adolescents can enjoy recreational, educational, and protection activities.

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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