

## UNHCR Ecuador

Esmeraldas

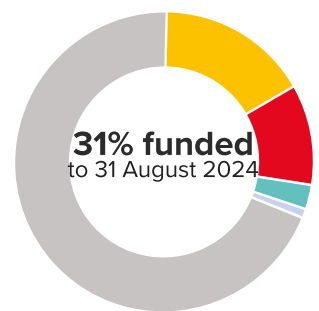
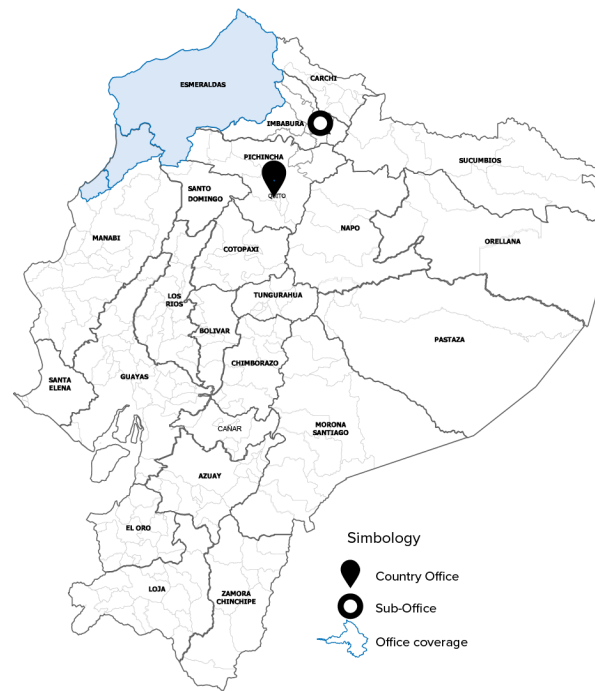
September 2024



### Operational context

UNHCR opened the Esmeraldas Field Office in 2008, covering Esmeraldas Province, and Pedernales in Manabí province. Esmeraldas is an economic hub for exports of shrimp, bananas, palm oil and oil refinery. Despite the importance to the national economy, almost 48% of the population live in poverty, and public infrastructure and services are limited. The province is also extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change and natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, and has the highest rates of dengue and chikungunya in the country. From 2022-2023, insecurity has increased significantly, bringing many new protection risks and operational challenges, for example, dynamics of inter-neighborhood, inter-cantonal and inter-provincial displacement due to direct threats from organized criminal groups and extortion. In addition, the recruitment and use of children and adolescents and school dropouts heighten protection risks for young men and women.

Esmeraldas is a diverse province; with 53% of the population identifying as Afro-Ecuadorian, and large communities of Awa, Chachi, and Epera indigenous groups. The rich diversity of the community, and the geographic location bordering Nariño - Colombia, has resulted in Esmeraldas being an attractive place for local integration of Colombian refugees, and since 2017 to Venezuelans. While many Colombians fleeing from Nariño, Valle de Cauca, and Cauca, have extended family ties and social networks in Esmeraldas, in contrast, Venezuelans are drawn to the province for its culture, climate and economic opportunities. UNHCR continues to work on improving reception conditions, access to humanitarian assistance, local integration, as well as strengthening community protection networks and the capabilities of local authorities, and developing initiatives to mitigate climate change risks, in the context of a fluid and challenging security environment.



**73.3M**  
required for the operation in Ecuador in 2024

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

### Key figures:

#### Recognized refugees in Esmeraldas Province

**5,948** Colombians  
**152** Venezuelans  
**13** Others

*\*Historical figure until 30 September 2024*

January - September 2024)

**254** Colombians  
**38** Venezuelans

**3,604**

asylum claims of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing, 13% (449 cases) in Esmeraldas.

*Between January and July 2024*

#### Historical number of asylum-seekers

**22,871** Colombians  
**2,327** Venezuelans  
**596** Other

*\*Historical figure until 30 Sept. 2024*

January and September 2024

**465** Colombians  
**197** Venezuelans  
**1** Other

**1,600**

people obtained a VIRTE Visa in Esmeraldas during the regularization process, the majority from Venezuela

*Between 2022 and 2024*

UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by private and public donors who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding so far in 2024.



## Working with partners

UNHCR's Esmeraldas Field Office implements protection and durable solutions programmes directly and through its implementing partners in accordance with UNHCR Ecuador's Multi-Year Strategy and Global Protection Priorities, and the Regional Response Platform for the Venezuelan population, which UNHCR leads locally in Esmeraldas. UNHCR works with four partners: HIAS, FEPP, FUDELA, and NRC. It also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Ombudsman's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and the Directorate of International Protection and Cantonal Boards for the Protection of Rights.

### Key activities



#### Protection

UNHCR and partners conduct the following in 2024:

- Advocacy with government entities and the private sector for access to services, local integration and exercise of human rights, prevention of evictions and social inclusion.
- Registration with biometrics, case management/provision of protection information and guidance on access to asylum, migration alternatives, access to services and humanitarian assistance programmes.
- Cash based interventions to respond to the variety needs of newly arrived families such as food, shelter, access to education, livelihoods and others.
- Prevention and response to survivors of gender-based violence, and provision of case management services for unaccompanied children and adolescents, including to those who need relocation due to insecurity.
- Strengthening the refugee status determination process with authorities through direct assistance and in documentation brigades.
- Capacity-building and technical support for legal advice and representation of refugees and asylum-seekers through the Ombudsman's Office and the Public Defender's Office of Ecuador and the Cantonal Systems for the Protection of Rights (SCPD).
- Support for community-based protection networks to implement protection programmes on arts, culture and sports, as well as the prevention of gender-based violence, communications with communities, sexual and reproductive health and child protection.
- Shelter and community-based interventions to strengthen safe community spaces.



#### Livelihoods and economic inclusion

UNHCR and partners conduct the following in 2024:

- Mitigating the risks of extortion through secure marketing strategies for products and services, secure employment, education and access to financial services.
- Awareness-raising events with private actors and host communities for labor recruitment and inclusion.
- Livelihood and socioeconomic inclusion projects with FUDELA targeting vulnerable people from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, including youth.
- Coordination with academic institutions in technical vocational training and entrepreneurship innovation processes, with emphasis on hotel and tourism sectors.
- Livelihood activities are closely linked to social cohesion efforts, recognizing that Venezuelan, Colombians, and Ecuadorians working together fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance.



#### Durable Solutions

UNHCR and partners conduct the following in 2024:

- Fight against xenophobia and discrimination, together with civil society organizations and public institutions, through information campaigns to promote solidarity and coexistence.
- Improving resilient communities through integration activities supporting the initiatives of the Ministry of Sports, in line with UNHCR's sports for protection strategy.



#### Coordination

UNHCR and partners conduct the following in 2024:

- UNHCR leads the local Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM).
- Support to the Human Mobility Roundtable of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. Binational coordination with counterparts of the United Nations system (Ecuador-Colombia).