

Ecuador

Operational Update

N.2 | February 2023

*Desiree is one of 16 community leaders helping deliver internet services to their neighbourhood.
Photo: UNHCR/Santiago Arcos*

Figures at a glance

Population figures

74,542

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador¹

60,319

refugees with active cases registered on UNHCR's database¹

96% from neighbouring Colombia



Our 2023 response in figures

84,921

assistance provided to refugees and other displaced people as of the end of February 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

25,851

guidance and legal assistance

4,092

cash assistance for basic needs & protection

4,719

emergency shelter accommodation

764

assistance for access to employment and entrepreneurship

9,802

hygiene kits delivered

5,497

GBV survivors assistance

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

Operational context

The registration and regularization process continued through February with the start of registration of Venezuelans who had entered Ecuador irregularly (see page three for further details). On the other hand, the entry of people in need of international protection continues, particularly Colombians fleeing violence in some parts of their home country. Government remains open to providing this much needed protection to those forced flee as well as to those seeking to integrate locally in the Andean country.

Sectional elections took place in February, with new mayors and prefectures chosen by constituents. All those elected are foreseen to take office in May 2023.

With a widespread deterioration of conditions in the country – mostly in terms of poverty and insecurity – Ecuadorians continue to leave within mixed movements north, reaching

the top three nationalities attempting to cross through the Darien. Guayaquil, the second host to refugees in the country, registered an increase in violence, with 1,537 violent deaths reported last year. With 3.21 million inhabitants, it is the second largest city in the country, Guayaquil presents 47.77 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants.

In the meantime, natural disasters and the effects of climate change continue across the country, with February witnessing an increasing trend in heavy rains and landslides across regions like Chimborazo, Esmeraldas, El Oro, Guayas, Loja and Los Ríos. Damages and life loss were reported in some areas. In addition, a 6.8 earthquake hit the Guayas Province by mid-March, leaving at least 14 dead and many more injured. These areas are host to a significant number of refugees and migrants, and UNHCR, in coordination with local authorities, provided support to deliver assistance.

Main populations forced to flee hosted by Ecuador

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 445,388 people entered Ecuador in 2022, with a daily entry average of 1,220 Venezuela Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 30,808 people entered Ecuador in February 2023, with a daily entry average of 1,026 Venezuelans. This represents a 14.7% decrease as compared to the same period in 2022.

502,200 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador²

73% estimated to be in an irregular status³

42% estimated to be between 26 and 35 years old³

23% estimated to have a higher education degree⁴

Main needs

83% access to food³

64% access to housing or shelter³

53% access to livelihoods or employment³



See 71 organizations of the Working Group on Refugees and Migrants require USD300 million for the response to people in human mobility in Ecuador

The Working Group on Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) in Ecuador and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility presented in February the plan to respond to the needs of Venezuelan and other refugees and migrants as well as their host communities in 2023 to the international community in Ecuador, with a total financial requirement of 300.9 million dollars. [Read more.](#)

Colombians

685 Colombians were registered in need of international protection so far in 2023, 319 in February, 68% of whom were families with children. This accounts for a 3.8% increase as compared to the same period in 2022.

4,280 Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2022²

300 were registered in December

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

69% access to food, housing, clothing⁵

24% access to employment and services⁵

6% access to documentation⁵

² According to data estimated by UNHCR and its partners within the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish)

³ Fourth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info

⁴ Third R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info

⁵ 2021 Protection Monitoring available at our [data portal](#)

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

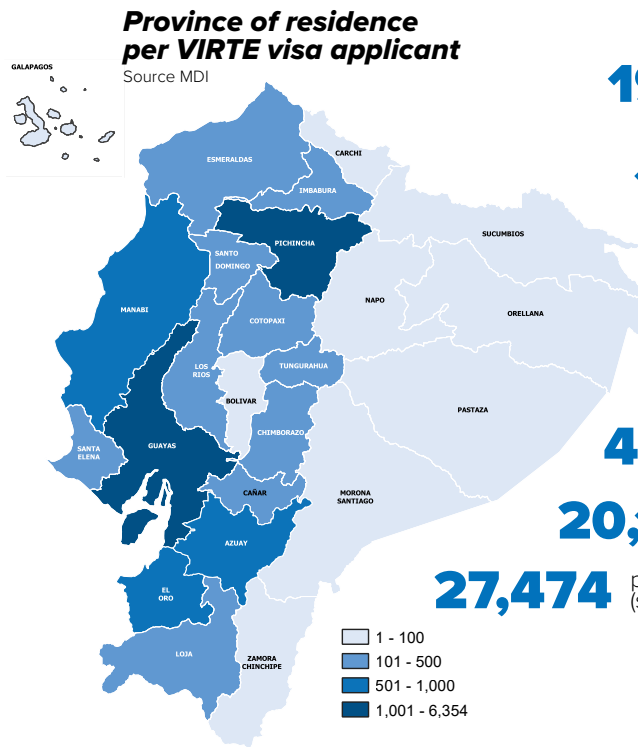
According to the joint need assessment conducted in 2022, a high proportion of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador is in an irregular situation (73 per cent), and facing obstacles in accessing the formal labour market, exposing them to protection risks and limiting their socio-economic integration prospects. In this context, the broad Registration and Regularization exercise has been key in enabling the needs of this population to be met and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socio-economic 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.

Regularization of Venezuelans who entered regularly began on 1 October, and 61,631 visa applications had been lodged, 46,118 visas had been granted and 27,474 ID cards had been delivered by 31 March.

Registration continues, with some 189,261 people having appointments for their biometric registration and over 147,000 people who have a stay certificate, by 31 March.



194,794 people registered through the official website (source: MDI)

189,261 people with appointments for biometric registration (source: MDI)

147,026 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

61,631 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

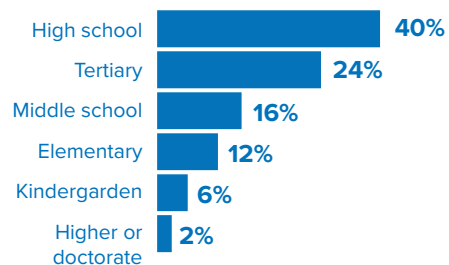
46,118 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

20,114 people with appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

27,474 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

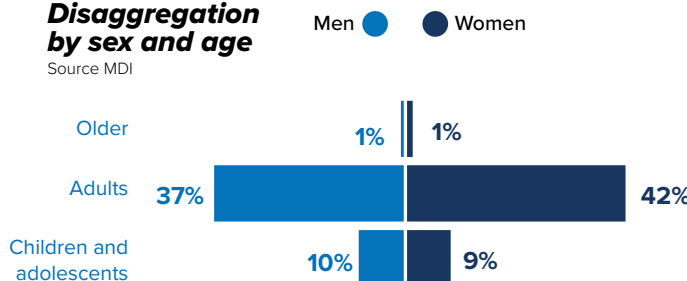
Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

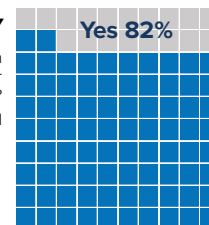
Source MDI



Desire to stay

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

Source MDI



DELIVERING PROTECTION

QUITO

Fostering International Protection from the classroom



UNHCR works with local authorities and the academia in strengthening knowledge on the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. In the framework of the workshops on awareness raising tools to fight xenophobia and discrimination led by the Pichincha Prefecture, UNHCR was invited to present the human mobility and international protection module. 71 psychology major students from Universidad Central del Ecuador and six World Vision staff participated in this space where Ecuadorian and foreign young adults learned of the current situation of refugees in the country and the need to facilitate access to their rights.

CARCHI

Delivering documentation to refugees



Obtaining the correct and relevant documentation makes a difference in the access to rights for refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador and beyond. UNHCR, partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the Colombian Consulate undertook two documentation brigades to Chical and Pedro Vicente Maldonado to provide support in the renewal of international protection visas to 67 refugees. In addition, 24 documents were apostilled, and 16 Colombian Passports were delivered to their owners.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

SAN GABRIEL, CARCHI

Enhancing education in collaboration with local students

UNHCR and Fudela launched the ‘Adopt a Brother’ programme aimed at motivating high scoring students to become tutors for 30 refugee and 20 Ecuadorian children from the Mario Oña de San Gabriel Carchi school who need an extra help to keep up with their grades. This programme will run until July 2023 with visits, extracurricular activities, directed homework and afterschool lessons on math, literature, natural science, among others. Students receiving tutoring are currently under the poverty line and at risk of school dropouts.



GUAYAQUIL

Delivering medical attention where its most needed

UNHCR, the Red Cross and CDH conducted a medical brigade in Isla Trinitaria where 36 refugees received medical assistance, including vital sign checks, illness assessment, follow up to preexisting conditions, as well as medicine. These brigades will continue through 2023 based on a work plan drafted by the three partners in support of health subcentres in prioritized neighbourhoods in Guayaquil.



PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

CARCHI & SUCUMBÍOS

Engaging private sector in supporting small refugee businesses



UNHCR has been supporting refugees and locals in the production of textiles to improve and sell their products in El Carmelo (Carchi) and El Playon (Sucumbios). Their products made by the communities are then linked to private sector actors to facilitate their insertion in the market and to help producers earn a living from their craft.

NATIONAL

UNHCR and the Italian Embassy supported 6000 refugees and locals in accessing business opportunities



UNHCR and the Italian Embassy presented the results of the project implemented in 2022 in support of refugees and migrants in Ecuador, including gender-based violence survivors and LGBTIQ+ people. Among the support provided included training, seed capital and strengthening of leadership skills, benefitting around 6.000 people in conditions of vulnerability. [See more.](#)

NATIONAL

UN System launches initiative to boost small refugee and local businesses



The UN System in Ecuador launched 'Compra con Propósito', an initiative to help refugee and local entrepreneurs sell their products in stores across the country in a shelf that promotes fair businesses, responsible purchasing, inclusive markets and a sustainable economy. Compra con Propósito (or Purchase with Purpose) has been established in small stores in places like Esmeraldas, Quito, Lago Agrio, Manta, among others. [Read more.](#)

CLIMATE ACTION

QUITO

Building a climate action culture



UNHCR, local authorities and AVSI conducted a series of trainings to refugee and local leaders in the Oriente Quiteño neighbourhood to promote the creation of community gardens where residents could learn about how to grow their own food while learning about how to care for the environment. This is one of many community gardens being established around Quito as part of the climate action strategy to further a green culture among refugees and locals.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

UNHCR and Aucas sign agreement in favour of refugees in Ecuador



UNHCR and Sociedad Deportiva Aucas, a very popular and traditional football team in Ecuador, signed a partnership to raise awareness about the rights of refugees, forced displacement and to promote inclusion. Part of the agreement is that Aucas will use the UNHCR logo in its official t-shirt as a symbol of their commitment to the refugee cause. This makes Aucas the first soccer team in the Americas to have the UNHCR logo in its shirt. Moreover, several activities like information points at the stadium, screening of UNHCR content during the half-time of the soccer match and outreach activities with Aucas' soccer players, refugees and locals will be planned. [Read more.](#)

AMBATO

Refugees and migrants shine at Ambato Carnival



A refugee and migrant Dance Crew in Ambato were provided a spot at the local carnival by the municipality to help raise awareness on the contributions people in human mobility can make to the local culture. With support from UNHCR, this dance crew produced brand new costumes to showcase the combination of their dance and performance skills. [See more.](#)

DON'T MISS

NATIONAL

Solidarity initiatives



On the Other Side. [Learn more.](#)



Somos Inclusion. [Learn more.](#)



Interagency campaign HUMANX. [Learn more.](#)

Stories from the field

‘Network Guardians’ help to bridge gender digital gap in Ecuadorian neighbourhood

[▶ Learn more about Desiree](#)

Desiree can now use a tablet at home with her youngest daughter Camila, 6, thanks to the new internet service in her community. Photo: UNHCR/Santiago Arcos

GUAYAQUIL

Desiree Núñez wakes up early in her small home in Guayaquil, the largest city in southwest Ecuador. She is getting ready to start her rounds of Juan Montalvo, the neighbourhood that opened its doors to her and her children four years ago, to let the community know the good news: there’s a new and free internet service that can be used by everyone.

“This is very exciting. It’s the first time we have internet in our neighbourhood,” said Desiree.

According to assessments conducted by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in three main refugee-hosting neighbourhoods in the city, most people lacked a reliable internet connection due to high costs and poor infrastructure, posing barriers to digital inclusion and leaving a large population disconnected. “Not having internet means I cannot promote my business, my children cannot do their homework properly and I can’t communicate with my family as much as I would like to,” said Desiree.

Thanks to a community-led initiative that makes use of blockchain

technology, supported by UNHCR through local telecom startup Wayru and other partners, thousands of residents of Juan Montalvo will now be connected to a high-quality fiber network with Wi-Fi routers that have a 100 metre radius on each block.

As Desiree heads out, she checks the router and signal on her block, making sure everything is running smoothly. “I need to keep the service working for everyone,” said the 32-year-old, who is one of 16 community leaders that have volunteered to become ‘guardians’ of the Wi-Fi routers, 13 of whom are women. “Having internet is very important and I must make sure nothing happens to it [the router]. I am glad to do this for the community. Most of us didn’t have internet because we cannot afford it.”

Apart from supporting refugee and local community leaders with training on how to troubleshoot problems with the routers and spread the word about this free service, the programme provided the guardians, and dozens of youth, with digital economy courses to teach them how to use this technology to grow a small business or find jobs. [Read more.](#)

You can help people like Desiree who had to leave their homes and now dream of rebuilding their lives. [Donate now.](#)

We thank the contributions of our donors

28 March 2023

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



UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the support from private donors.

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