UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Ecuador
Operational Update

N.6 | November 2023

Dilia, Aciel and Adali are from different countries but in Ecuador they have found common ground to thrive together. Photo: UNHCR/Diana Díaz.

Figures at a glance

Population figures

75,803

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

95% from neighbouring Colombia

62,569

refugees with active cases registered in ProGres[1]

Our 2023 response in figures

162,456

refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of November 2023

54,569
people received legal guidance & assistance

21,743
people assisted with cash for basic needs & protection

12,804
people supported with collective emergency shelter

562
people provided with technical or skills certification

740
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

16,448
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

33,904
people received hygiene kits

2,914
GBV survivors supported

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**

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 October 2023.

Operational context

The regularization process in Ecuador continues, with people continuing to apply for their visa and receiving their Ecuadorian ID, although some applications have taken longer than expected to be approved (see page 3 for more information).

On 20 November, the second phase of the Safe Mobility Programme (SMO) began with the opening of online applications through the website www.movilidadsegura.org. UNHCR and IOM staff are working on case management to schedule interviews for eligible applicants. Information about the programme is being disseminated on the social media of both organizations to prevent fraud against applicants.

On 23 November, Daniel Noboa assumed the presidency of Ecuador. Within his work plan, he included proposals to address the mixed movements towards Ecuador, through the socioeconomic inclusion of people on the move and the creation of support centers that offer legal advice, psychological assistance, language learning, and cultural orientation.

Venezuelans in some provinces of the Ecuadorian highlands (Tungurahua and Cotopaxi) have faced xenophobia and discrimination related to security incidents. Strong xenophobic messages have spread through social media and other statements, in response to these incidents. In the face of these events, UNHCR has worked closely with community leaders and local authorities to promote dialogue and prevent human rights violations. In addition, the #VineASumar campaign was implemented within the framework of "Un Mundo Posible" to reduce levels of xenophobia, highlighting the contributions of refugees and migrants to their host communities.

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. 29,250 people entered Ecuador in November 2023, with a daily entry average of 975 Venezuelans.

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]

Colombians

4,946 Colombians were registered in need of international protection so far in 2023, 419 in November, 72% of whom were families with children. This accounts for an 18% increase as compared to the same period in 2022. The current number of total asylum seekers in 2023 has already surpassed those registered in the entire 2017 and 2022.

4,527 Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2023[2]

- **470** were registered in October

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 this population 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.

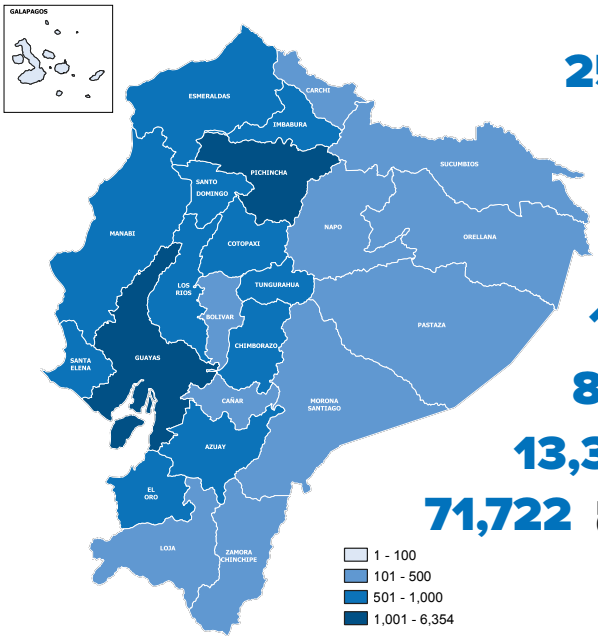
The first phase of registration started registering and regularizing all Venezuelans who entered regularly prior to the issuance of the Decree with a VIRTE visa. Registration is also divided in phases: first, Venezuelans who entered regularly beginning on 1 September 2022; second, people of all nationalities 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 18 December 2023, 126,381 visa applications had been lodged, 87,546 visas had been granted and 71,722 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 12 December.

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)

126,381 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

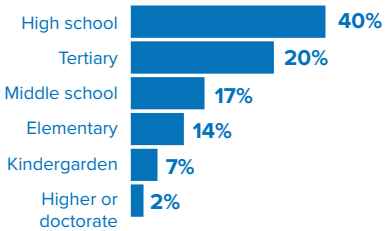
87,546 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

13,383 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

71,722 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

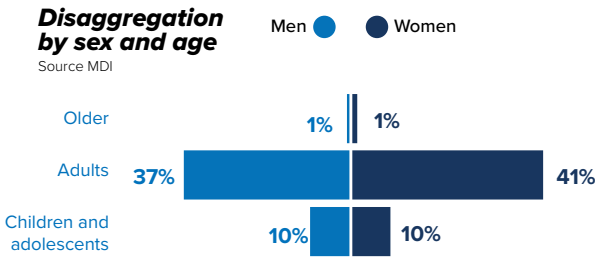
Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



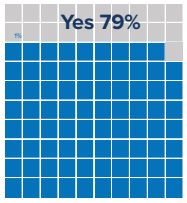
Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

Source MDI

Desire to stay

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

Source MDI



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 18 December 2023.

NATIONAL

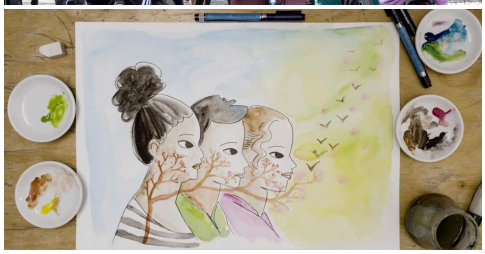
How UNHCR has supported the regularization process

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, 89,661 people have been supported in the process.

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

UNHCR works to create safe and violence-free environments for refugee women



In commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and during the 16 Days of Activism, UNHCR has carried out several initiatives as part of its commitment to the fight against gender-based violence.

In **Quito,** in collaboration with Akuanuna and Las Reinas Pepiadas, UNHCR launched an animated clip that collects testimonies from refugee and migrant women who share their experiences regarding gender violence. Learn more here. In addition, UNHCR supported Red Violeta in carrying out a cycling event aimed at promoting safe and harassment-free environments.

Also, at **national level,** UNHCR and partners carried out workshops on the prevention of gender-based violence for refugees, migrants and their host communities. These activities were complemented with capacity building sessions for public officials focused on the prevention and response to gender-based violence.

NATIONAL

UNHCR works to ensure access to documentation and protection for people in human mobility

UNHCR works with partners to ensure that refugees have access to documentation. This is essential to promote the respect and enjoyment of their fundamental human rights, like the right to education, health and work, among others.

Accross the country, UNHCR and partners have provided legal assistance and guidance to 2,508 people in human mobility in resettlement, asylum, and international protection processes, in November. UNHCR has also identified specific protection needs and provided information on the safe mobility programme to interested applicants.

TULCÁN

Strengthening service delivery skills of public officials

In Tulcan, UNHCR, HIAS, and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) completed a five-month capacity-building programme to address various protection areas, including child development and protection, social protection for older people and people with disabilities, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and the application of psychological first aid in a forced displacement context. 168 officials from MIES participated.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

IBARRA

Strengthening access to shelter services

To improve access to shelter services in Ibarra, UNHCR held a shelter management workshop with a focus on protection and safety. A total of 33 people who provide social services strengthened their knowledge in shelter management, referral of cases of gender-based violence, and security protocols.

ESMERALDAS

Working with authorities to improve access to health services for refugees and migrants

Inclusive health services are a fundamental part of the integration of people forced to flee. In this sense, UNHCR carried out a Training of Trainers workshop aimed at the medical staff of the Ministry of Public Health of Esmeraldas. In this space, the capacities of health professionals on issues related to HIV were strengthened to improve care with a rights-based approach.

EL ÁNGEL

Breathing inclusion in health centers

In Espejo, UNHCR carried out a "Respiramos Inclusión" workshop for 17 officials from the El Ángel Basic Hospital, in order to promote inclusive access for refugees and migrants to health services. Under a series of similar trainings across the northern border areas, the purpose of this space is to provide tools that promote good treatment, inclusion and non-discrimination in the provision of health services.

PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

NATIONAL

Christmas Showroom to Purchase with Purpose

UNHCR launched the digital Christmas Showroom of the Purchase with Purpose initiative, where 35 Ecuadorian and refugee entrepreneurs are displaying their products. The platform offers a variety of products and services that are a testament to the resilience and innovation of each entrepreneur who is looking to generate a more sustainable economy for their families by marketing their small businesses.

IBARRA

Inclusion Entrepreneurship Schools

In Ibarra, 30 women with disabilities from the Fundación El Poder de una Huarmi participated in a program to strengthen their productive capacities in their businesses. In this innovative teaching space, UNHCR and partners provide four training modules using materials and an educational model accessible to all. Participants emphasized the importance of continuous training in these topics to identify new opportunities that contribute to their business ideas.

BAÑOS

Promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of refugee families

In Baños, UNHCR and partners awarded certificates to 12 entrepreneurs who completed the ideation phase of "Learning to Thrive," a space created to develop their business ideas. This programme aims to explore new opportunities and better strategies for sustainable livelihoods so small businesses can become companies with the support they receive continuously.

CLIMATE ACTION

NATIONAL

Strengthening protection and prevention ain the face of El Niño phenomenon

In Ecuador, where numerous refugees and migrants reside in areas prone to natural disasters, UNHCR is intensifying prevention and preparedness, complementing government efforts. This includes training for leaders, and information sharing on preparation to mitigate the impact of El Niño phenomenon. Within the framework of UNHCR co-leadership in the Shelter sector of the humanitarian country team of the UN System, the collaboration extends to 8 national shelters and a broader network of accommodation in cities that receive a significant number of the refugee population, and It has emergency kits that would benefit some 8,500 people affected by disasters. As part of these measures, and in collaboration with the Secretary of Risk Management, 40 officials from the Manta Autonomous Government (GAD) were trained in the management of temporary accommodations, international protection principles, and technical regulations for the prevention and response to emergencies caused by natural disasters. Learn more.

CHICAL

Working together to mitigate climate change

UNHCR, FUDELA and local GADs in the border parish of El Chical, Ecuador, inaugurated a project to mitigate the effects of climate change. The project included the construction of a multipurpose room and a gazebo in the central park.

The inauguration was attended by 25 people, including local authorities, representatives of the organizations involved and young people who received training in bamboo management.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

Three t-shirts designed by young artists will raise funds for refugees in Ecuador

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and AEROPOSTALE announced the winners of the youth with refugees art contest in Ecuador, which sought to highlight the meaning of finding hope away home. Three of the winning designs have been printed on AEROPOSTALE t-shirts that are on sale to support refugees in the country until March 2024.

More than 40 young refugee, migrant and Ecuadorian artists residing in Ecuador contributed drawings and illustrations that symbolize hope. The complete list of winners and special mentions can be seen here.

These t-shirts are launched within the framework of International Human Rights Day, which is celebrated every 10 December, a date that commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration provides for a wide range of fundamental rights, including the right to seek asylum. Read more here and buy your t-shirt here.

Spreading peace and positiveness with each infusion in La Paz

Through INTIVA, project members want to give a bit of the peace they have in their home in La Paz. Photo: UNHCR / Diana Díaz

LA PAZ

Dilia takes a deep breath of the fresh air in La Paz, a small and peaceful town in the hills of Ecuador's norther Carchi Province. The green view reminds her of her hometown in Colombia. "I grew up in the fields, for me this feels like home. I love working the land," said the 29-year-old Colombian refugee. For her, it became natural to work with crops and growing herbs when she joined INTIVA, an infusion project where she other refugees, migrants and Ecuadorians craft mixtures of herbs and plants.

While Aciel, a young 26-year-old- Venezuelan, is not as green-thumbed, this project has helped her explore new ways to generate income for her family. "I used to work as a cashier in a supermarket. For me it was hard to work the land, I wasn't used to this," she said. "But learning how to grow herbs and plants has been rewarding."

Dilia and Aciel are two of at least eight refugees, migrants and Ecuadorians who joined forces to create INTIVA, a community-based business where they learn how to mix herbs to create infusions based on market research. With support from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its partner HIAS, this group has learned about business management, growth, market assessments and product marketing, as well as gender-based violence and refugee protection.

"At the beginning we thought this idea was absurd, but as we learned how to mix everything, the herbs, the fruits it turned out to be an interesting experience," said Adali, a 46-year-old Ecuadorian participating in the project. "But most importantly, INTIVA is a place where we take care of each other."

But INTIVA is so much more than a project to make a living. For people like Dilia and Aciel, it has become the tool to integrate and build a community with locals. "I feel like any other Ecuadorian," said Dilia. "I am grateful to Ecuador for all it has given me," complemented Aciel. "We all have our differences, but we have learned to move past that to build something great," mentioned Adali.

"We really want to give consumers a piece of what we have been able to receive here: a bit of the peace and hope we now have in Ecuador," added Aciel.

You can help strengthen the work done by community groups like INTIVA.
Donate now.

We thank the contributions of our donors

15 December 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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