

Ecuador

Operational Update

N.4 | March 2024

Figures at a glance

Population figures

76,265

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador¹

63,322

refugees with active cases registered in ProGres¹

94% from neighbouring Colombia

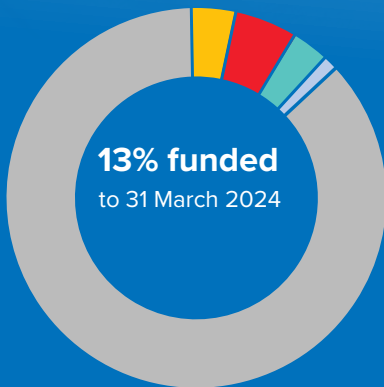


Our 2024 response in figures

18,107

refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of March 2024*

*Partial figures reported by partners. People reported may have benefitted from one or several services.



6,372

people received legal guidance & assistance

4,533

people assisted with cash for basic needs and protection

4,242

people supported with collective emergency shelter

2,152

people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

66

people linked with a decent employment opportunity

1,243

GBV survivors supported

7

people provided with technical or skills certification

1,053

people received hygiene kits

73.3M
required in 2024

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

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

The first thing Mery did when she and her family arrived in Ecuador was to enrol her children Camilo and Victoria in school so they could continue their education. Now she helps other families overcome obstacles in accessing education in Ecuador.
Photo: UNHCR/Jeoffrey Guillemard

Operational context

The number of Colombian asylum seekers in Ecuador has increased considerably during the first trimester of 2024, registering an 88 per cent increase as compared to the same period in 2023. With armed conflict-related violence in several parts of Colombia, UNHCR expects the number of people in need of international protection to continue rising in 2024. In [2022](#), more than 280,000 people were internally displaced (over 1 million since the 2016 Peace Agreement). The departments of Bolívar, Chocó, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Nariño were the main affected by confinements and forced displacements – the last three being historical places of origin for people seeking international protection in Ecuador. UNHCR continues working with the Government to reinforce its asylum system to provide access for people in need of international protection.

On the other hand, the regularization process will begin a transition to consolidation on 5 April 2024 (deadline to apply for the visa) until end of June, giving the time for people to finish obtaining their identity documents and start applying for the renovation of their visas. At least 201,000 people had registered for their process (97 per cent of whom were Venezuelan), 96,000 of whom obtained a visa (see more details on page 3).

The Government extended the State of Exception for an additional 30 days in March to continue engaging in the fight against criminal groups in the framework of the internal armed conflict declared by President Noboa in early 2024. In

addition, the Organic Law on Addressing the Internal Armed Conflict, and the Social and Economic Crisis was officially published on the registry, increasing taxes to be able to afford the fight against violence and insecurity. Even with the many efforts and operatives to curb violence, several incidents were reported in March – days before the end of the state of exception period. These included the murder of the mayor of the coastal city of San Vicente (Manabí) and another member of her team. Meanwhile, the Government is preparing for national consultations to be held in April, with insecurity and violence dominating some of the questions to be posed to the general population.

Ecuador continues to bear witness to the dire impacts of climate change on the population and over forced displacement. The Andean region and the Ecuadorian coast have been experiencing a heatwave for the past few days. According to experts, cities like Guayaquil have reached temperatures as high as 36°C during March. Similarly, in the Ecuadorian highlands, authorities have issued warnings about extremely high levels of radiation. In addition, high levels of rainfall continued to affect Ecuador, particularly on the routes to Coast and in Quito, where a landslide took place on 3 April in la Gasca – neighbourhood that was the scene of a 2022 landslide. According to local authorities, one person died and at least 19 families in Quito were affected, many of whom opted to move from the neighbourhood.

Main populations forced to flee hosted by Ecuador and others of concern

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. An estimated 24,406 people entered Ecuador in March 2024, with a daily entry average of 787 Venezuelans, compared to exit figures registering 23,841 and 769 daily exits on average. This represents a 13% decrease in entries and a 25% increase in exits as compared to the same period in 2023.

474,945 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador²

45% estimated to be between 18 and 45 years old³

25% estimated to have a higher education degree³

Main needs

82% access to food³

67% access to housing or shelter³

57% access to livelihoods or employment³

Colombians

Colombians continue to flee to Ecuador. According to Government authorities, 2,019 Colombians filed asylum claims so far in 2024, 889 in March, a 128% increase as compared to the same month in 2023. The number registered in 2024 accounts for 38% of the number registered in the entire 2023, and an 88% increase as compared to the first trimester of 2023.

2,019 Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2024²

889 were registered in March

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

77% access to food, housing, clothing⁴

10% access to rights and services (job, education)⁴

7% access to documentation⁴

Ecuadorians

The number of Ecuadorians on the run has increased in the past years, with over 85,000 having crossed the Darien jungle since 2022. By the end of March 2024, Ecuadorians continue to be the second nationality to have [crossed the Darien](#), with just over 8,900 people who are part of the over 110,000 people registered during the first trimester of the year. By end of February 2024, over 22,000 Ecuadorians had arrived [irregularly to Mexico](#). Moreover, 46,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims by mid-2023.

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. Figures of asylum claims from the Government.

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

⁴ 2023 Protection Monitoring Report available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ecu>

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

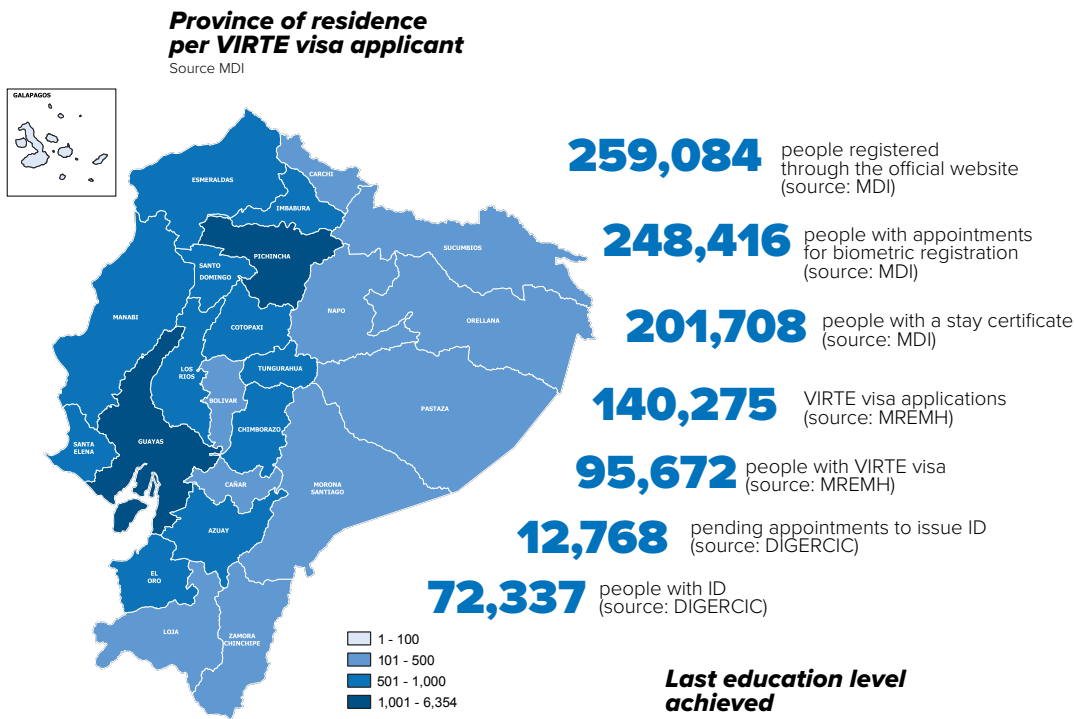
The broad Registration and Regularization exercise has been key in enabling the needs of this population to be met and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socioeconomic integration strategy.

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. Following the end of the deadline to apply for the visa, by 22 April 2024, over 140,000 visa applications were lodged, more than 95,000 visas had been granted and 72,337 ID cards had been delivered. People who managed to apply for the visa can continue the process to obtain their ID card.



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)

140,275 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

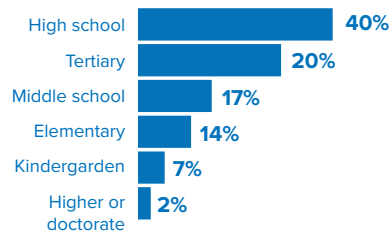
95,672 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

12,768 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

72,337 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

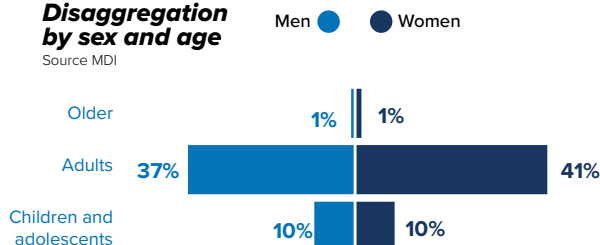
Last education level achieved

Source: MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source: MDI



Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

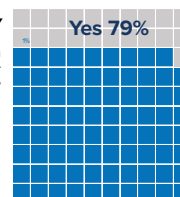
Source: MDI



Desire to stay

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

Source: MDI



DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

Strengthening protection and inclusion in Ecuador



Through various workshops and collaborations with government entities and local organizations, UNHCR is working to strengthen the rights protection system and to promote the integration of refugees and migrants into their host communities.

In El Coca, UNHCR, along with the Public Defender’s Office of Ecuador and the Francisco de Orellana Municipal GAD held an informative workshop on the regularization process for 23 Municipal Police officers.

In Quito, UNHCR the Inclusion Secretariat provided a workshop for 17 officials from the city’s 9 zonal administrations. The workshop focused on topics such as asylum, human mobility, livelihoods, community protection, and the network of services available to refugees and migrants.

In Huaca and Montúfar, UNHCR, together with the Public Defender’s Office of Ecuador, held workshops on international protection for refugees and the regularization.



OTAVALO

Empowering Otavalo’s Rights Network to strengthen child protection



With UNHCR support, the Otavalo Municipality and the Otavalo Cantonal Council for the Protection of Rights began a training process aimed at the cantonal rights network, parish councils, and political lieutenants. This initiative seeks to strengthen the capacities of the actors involved in the Child Protection System. The programme consists of eight modules, and the first addressed the topic of International Protection, contextualizing human mobility in Ecuador.

NATIONAL

Renewing alliances to strengthen protection and development for people on the move



UNHCR renewed its agreement with the Ombudsman’s Office to strengthen the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced persons.

Working with the Ombudsman’s Office, efforts will be made to address new challenges in international protection and seek durable solutions for vulnerable populations. Protection and training initiatives for public servants will be promoted.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

NATIONAL

Promoting wellbeing and peaceful coexistence in schools

UNHCR is fostering the creation of educational environments free from discrimination, where all students and teachers feel valued and supported. In Pimampiro, the Respiramos Inclusión process was launched at the Unidad Educativa Pimampiro with a self-care session for 40 teachers. This initiative aims to create a space for emotional release and mental health care for teaching staff.

In Ibarra, UNHCR carried out the transfer of the Respiramos Inclusión methodology at the Unidad Educativa Alejandro Pasquel Monge. The objective is to provide tools for peaceful coexistence to 13 teachers and 5 representatives of the Mothers' Committee.



SANTO DOMINGO

Enhancing the quality of healthcare for refugees and migrants

UNHCR has successfully completed the renovation of the Augusto Egas Health Center in Santo Domingo, optimizing healthcare for people on the move and their host communities. With the support of KOICA, essential medical equipment was donated, and the emergency care area was refurbished. This will allow for more accurate and efficient medical care.

These improvements represent a significant step forward in strengthening the healthcare system for people on the run in Santo Domingo, ensuring that they have access to quality and timely medical care.



TULCAN

Strengthening management skills at temporary accommodation services

UNHCR and the National Risk Management Secretariat held the "Technical Foundations for Temporary Accommodation Management" Workshop in Tulcán, with the participation of 30 representatives from different NGOs, Municipal Governments, and the Carchi Prefecture.

The objective of this workshop is to strengthen the capacities of municipal officials and humanitarian workers to face emergency situations in temporary shelters.



PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

GUAYAQUIL

Socioeconomic reintegration opportunities for refugees



UNHCR signed the letter of Understanding with the Municipal Public Company for the Management of Innovation and Competitiveness (ÉPICO) in Guayaquil, which will allow refugees and migrants to be included in their process to strengthen entrepreneurship. This strategic collaboration will help refugees have key skills for managing businesses and promoting innovative, transformative and competitive projects to create sustainable societies.

CUENCA

Financial education for refugee families is key to their empowerment



In Cuenca, UNHCR together with HIAS held a workshop on Financial Education and opening savings accounts, in which 18 refugee women and 6 men participated. With these trainings, families will be able to make decisions about managing their resources and generate savings to plan their future and thus improve their quality of life.

CLIMATE ACTION

📍 PRIORATO

Recycling to make ends meet and preserve the environment

During his visit to the Americas, Goodwill Ambassador Jung Woo-sung met RECIPRI in the province of Imbabura, an association of recyclers made up of 30 Venezuelan and Colombian refugees and migrants who work every day to care for the planet and its environment. Recycling is helping unite people of different ages, cultures and communities in a common goal which is to take care of the environment and carry out sustainable and ecological practices.



📍 IBARRA

Conscious consumption with ecological products

In Ibarra, UNHCR and its partners launched a line of accessories made with recycled materials by a group of women in human mobility with the support of Aéropostale and Plaza Shopping. The accessories will be on sale in 11 points in the country and 20% of the profits will be used in projects that encourage women’s leadership in different environments. The creators of these products are committed to eco-friendly solutions to contribute to the care of the environment through fashion.



PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

📍 NATIONAL

UNHCR AND AUCAS will continue their support for refugees in Ecuador



UNHCR and AUCAS renewed their alliance to promote the rights and integration of people forced to flee their countries. In the 2024 season, AUCAS will continue to wear the UNHCR logo on its t-shirt as a symbol of solidarity and commitment to those who rebuild their lives in Ecuador. Among the most anticipated activities are care courses and workshops for staff, coaching staff and players, soccer games in communities with the participation of boys, girls and adolescents, as well as with players; invitations to refugees and Ecuadorians to team games; and adherence to the commitments of the 2023 World Refugee Forum, among others. [Read more here.](#)

📍 NATIONAL

Activities in commemoration of International Women’s Day



In various parts of Ecuador, UNHCR together with its partners carried out activities in commemoration of International Women’s Day. Marches were held to integrate, empower and make visible their rights and their constant struggle. Refugee women, girls and adolescents participated in these activities. Information fairs were also organized on protection routes for women and reflective sessions on the historical role of women and the stereotypes that trigger inequality and gender-based violence.

📍 CARCHI

Sport as a community integration tool



In Carchi, the Community Champions programme was inaugurated with the participation of 30 refugee and local children and adolescents. This space supported by UNHCR together with FUDELA helps participants prepare to be future leaders through art, sports, music and culture. The methodology through sport generates integration between different nationalities. The objective is to strengthen skills like assertive communication, teamwork and self-development in various areas.

Stories from the field

One mother's passion for education empowers youth to thrive

Mery has witnessed how other parents are not so lucky as their children struggle to graduate or receive their diploma. She has become a community leader and an advocate for refugee youth to access secondary education

Photo: UNHCR/Jeffrey Guillemard

QUITO

Mery Espinoza is a community leader committed to the well-being of children and adolescents. She advocates for their access to quality education. Like nearly half a million Venezuelans living in Ecuador, she arrived in Quito in 2019, looking to rebuild her life with her family in the Andean country.

Always concerned about ensuring her children's basic needs, Mery anticipated the difficulties they might face in accessing the Ecuadorian educational system before leaving her native country. "If they don't go to school, they lose their life project, they feel mentally vulnerable, they feel they don't fit or identify with the country where they are." This foresight helped her take with them their passing grades, facilitating their entry into educational institutions in Ecuador.

Less than a month after their arrival, her kids began their studies in Quito. While the initial cultural shock and language differences between Ecuador and Venezuela posed a challenge, they are now fully integrated into their new life and excel as dedicated students.

Her experience as a leader has exposed her firsthand to the challenges young people in human mobility face in accessing education. Bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of resources often leave them disadvantaged, struggling to find their place in a new country. This is why she advocates for facilitating access to the education system for those in human mobility in her daily work.

However, her role as a leader goes beyond advocating for access to education. As part of her work, she has created spaces that promote integration between young people in human mobility and their host communities, enabling them to build their life projects. We work as a family," says Mery with conviction. "We create bonds that allow them to support each other in difficult situations, which has allowed us to learn as much about the culture of one country as that of another."

By providing guidance and training opportunities for personal and professional development, Mery aims to create a generation of young people in human mobility equipped with a solid life project that will enable them to build a better future.

You can help us continue empowering community leaders who make the difference in the lives of thousands. [Donate now.](#)

We thank the contributions of our donors

31 March 2024


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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