UNHCR Ecuador
Guayaquil Sub-Office
September 2024

Operational context

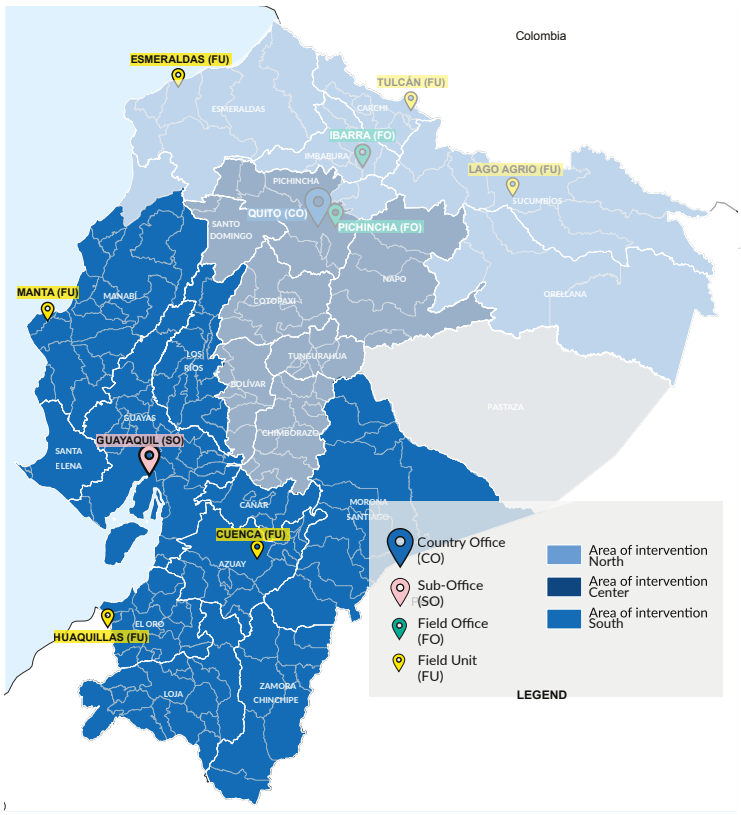
The Sub-Office Guayaquil covers four provinces of the Southern Region of Ecuador (Azuay, El Oro, Guayas, and Manabí), including the border with Peru and a large part of the Ecuadorian Pacific.

The Region presents various opportunities for the economic inclusion of refugees and migrants, given its reputation as the most dynamic in the country. However, refugees and migrants and their host communities live in difficult conditions in urban and semi-urban areas, facing difficulties in accessing basic rights and services, lack of job opportunities and informality.

The deteriorating security situation in the southern provinces has contributed to the disintegration of community, neighbourhood, and family networks for Venezuelan refugees and migrants and Colombian refugees. Furthermore, weakened social ties have affected local integration and increased protection risks.

In the areas where UNHCR and its partners are present, incidents of displacement, mobility restrictions, homicides, extortion and threats to leaders and the community in general, recruitment and use of children and adolescents by organized criminal groups are reported daily, affecting refugees, migrants and their host communities.

Despite the authorities' commitment to address the security situation and promote socioeconomic inclusion, there are still challenges to implement an effective inclusive and sustainable public policy for refugees and migrants in the area.



Key figures:

200,000
refugees and other displaced people registered by UNHCR and partners in the Southern Area
(the second largest concentration in the country after Pichincha)

43% Venezuelan	**50%** Colombian	**3%** Others

During 2024, UNHCR and partners have delivered:

15,155 people received legal counselling	**982** people received information and counselling on access to rights, including asylum, and basic services	**3,080** people were provided with specialized case management, 2.937 of them on GBV	**1,622** children and adolescents participated in peaceful coexistence activities	**15,045** temporary shelters and 151 GBV safe shelters strengthened
3,591 people received cash assistance		**17** communities supported	**174** businesses supported	**271** job vacancies covered by refugees and migrants

Working with partners - Protection & Solutions Strategy

UNHCR's interventions in the area have a focus on areas and communities most impacted by displacement, to alleviate suffering, restore dignity and enable access to solutions. Based on the continuous engagement with affected communities, key institutions, and the private sector, UNHCR is prioritizing lifesaving information and assistance, access to asylum and documentation and the socio-economic inclusion, with an area-based and community-based approach. The community-based protection regional strategy focuses on 3 key areas of intervention, i. Community empowerment and participation with a focus on age, gender and diversity; ii. Accountability to affected populations and communication with communities; iii. Social cohesion and mitigation of the risks of violence. Based on the identified protection needs and risks that refugees, migrants and host communities are facing, UNHCR is also working towards the socio-economic inclusion by facilitating access to the labour market – formal employment, entrepreneurship, and self-employment opportunities, as well as processes aimed at financial inclusion – in strong coordination with the private sector, academia, and local authorities.

To implement these actions, UNHCR works with partners and key stakeholders, including HIAS – NRC – Public Defender's Office – Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GADs), Empresa Pública Municipal para la Gestión de la Innovación y Competitividad (ÉPICO).

Key activities

Protection and assistance

In 2024, UNHCR and partners have:

- Conducted protection and border monitoring to identify key protection risks and promote an adequate response, including at the Ecuador-Peru border entry points and points of transit within the country, such as the Bus Terminal of Guayaquil.
- Provided access to information and counselling, including through brigades, and ensure adequate identification and referral of individuals with specific needs to specialized services and case management.
- Supported the network of X temporary shelters and GBV safe shelters in X localities for people facing heightened protection risks and GBV survivors by strengthening their technical, coordination and operational capacity.
- Supported the authorities in providing access to asylum and the regularization process through technical assistance, as well as financial and logistical support.
- Strengthened the Public Defender's Office and the Cantonal System of Comprehensive Rights Protection to facilitate access to rights, including legal assistance and representation, for refugees and asylum-seekers.
- Conducted workshops on "Internet Libre y Segura," empowering children to identify online protection risks and equipping them with essential prevention tools through engaging activities.
- Facilitated the enhancement of child protection and the prevention of gender-based violence through active participation in Youth Leadership Schools and Women Empowerment Circles.
- Strengthened shelters for GBV and enhanced educational units and community development centers, fostering community empowerment and transforming public spaces into safe protection areas.

Livelihoods

In 2024, UNHCR and partners have:

- Strived to support affected populations from the emergency phase of their displacement to their full socio-economic inclusion with a focus on business digitalization and innovation.
- Supported refugees and migrants who participated socio-economic inclusion programmes secured full-time employment in formal jobs.

Coordination

- In Huaquillas, Manta and Guayaquil, UNHCR co-leads the Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM), the inter-agency coordination platform that responds to the needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, while platform fully led by UNHCR in Cuenca.

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.

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

UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the support from private donors, including those in Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden.

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | UN MUNDO POSIBLE ¡Junto a ti!

CONTACT
Diana Díaz Rodríguez
External Relations Officer, Ecuador
diazdi@unhcr.org / Tel: +593 99 401 3567
UNHCR Ecuador