

# Ecuador

## Operational Update

N.3 | March 2025

*"We decided to cultivate and commercialize chillangua because, despite its great flavor, it isn't very well-known around here". © UNHCR/Omar Ganchala*

### Figures at a glance

#### Population figures

**78,629**

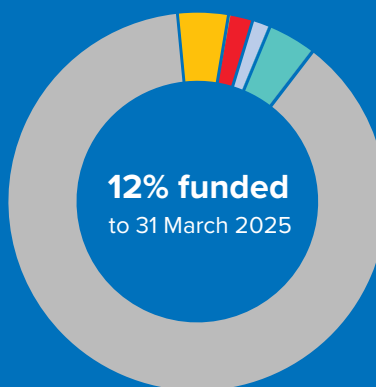
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador<sup>1</sup>

**67,286**

refugees with active cases registered in ProGres<sup>1</sup>

**95%**

from neighbouring Colombia



**73.3M**  
required in 2025

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

For more information on funding, please visit [reporting.unhcr.org/ecuador](https://reporting.unhcr.org/ecuador)

#### Our 2025 response in figures

**14,596\***

refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGres as of the end of March 2025



**9,716**

people received orientation and assistance to access asylum services



**3,451**

people supported with collective emergency shelter



**328**

people supported with child protection services



**1,023**

people supported with community - based protection services



**1,135**

women and girls survivors of violence supported



**2,830**

people assisted to cover their basic needs and protection



**2,860**

people supported with mental health and psychosocial support



**1,490**

people received hygiene kits



**22**

people provided with technical or skills certification



**382**

people linked with a decent employment opportunity

<sup>1</sup> Historical figure registered by the government to the end of December 2024. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of March 2025.

\*Figure includes people supported through other services beyond those described below.

## Operational context

The ongoing armed conflict in Colombia, particularly in the Catatumbo and Nariño regions, as well as other areas bordering Ecuador, has had a significant impact on forcibly displaced populations seeking refuge in Ecuador. The persistent violence has driven Colombian families to remain confined or flee across the border daily. UNHCR Ecuador and partners are responding to their needs by providing crucial assistance— from support to access the asylum system to emergency shelter and solutions. The humanitarian response aims to stabilize the lives of these displaced individuals, many of whom are victims of multiple types of violence and insecurity in their home regions.

In addition to the ongoing security crisis, Ecuador has been facing severe weather-related events, notably the destructive rainy season which has led to widespread flooding, landslides, and displacement. As of early April 2025, over 135,000 people have been affected, with more than 12,000 homes impacted and 33 fatalities recorded. These natural disasters disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, including refugees and asylum seekers already struggling with limited resources. UNHCR, in coordination with national authorities and the UN system, has been deploying humanitarian kits and support across the most affected areas, including Esmeraldas, Manabí, El Oro, and Guayas provinces.

This situation has worsened with the March 13 oil spill in Esmeraldas, which has contaminated water supplies for nearly 300,000 people. This environmental disaster, coupled

with the ongoing floods and rising violence near Ecuador’s border, underscores the fragility of living conditions for displaced populations. Moreover, UNHCR recorded 53 protection incidents in March 2025 affecting 57 people, bringing the total to 1,988 since 2024 across the country, with a cumulative impact on 1,779 people. Most of these incidents have involved violence against women and girls and widespread violence, among others. Similarly, since 2024, UNHCR has registered at least 191 internal displacements, 4 in March, affecting 558 refugees and their families.

In addition to these challenges, policy changes have created uncertainty for forcibly displaced Venezuelans. The recent repeal of Executive Decree 370 ended a pathway for regularization through the VIRTE II visa. This decision, justified by the Government largely due to budget constraints, has left thousands of Venezuelans in legal limbo, many of whom were in the process of regularizing their migratory status in the country. Civil society and humanitarian actors have expressed concern that this move threatens the rights and safety of forcibly displaced people, who had hoped to find stability and rebuild their lives in Ecuador.

These overlapping issues amplify the need for coordinated humanitarian efforts and sustainable policy measures to ensure that Ecuadorians, asylum seekers and refugees receive adequate protection, support, and access to basic services.

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



### Colombians

According to Government data, 585 Colombians sought asylum in Ecuador in March 2025 (1,318 so far in the year), a 51% increase as compared to the previous month and more than half of the number reported in the same month in 2024 (883). 71% of people registered arrived in the country in families of two or more. With 2024 registering the highest number of asylum claims filed by Colombians in Ecuador since 2014 and conditions worsening in the country of origin, including with constant internal displacements and confinements in departments at the border with Ecuador, UNHCR projects an important number of asylum claims in 2025.

**1,318** Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2025<sup>2</sup>

**585** were registered in March

### Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

**77%** access to food, housing, clothing<sup>4</sup>

**10%** access to rights and services (job, education)<sup>4</sup>

**7%** access to documentation<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. [www.r4v.info](http://www.r4v.info)

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



## Venezuelans



Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador, though in declining numbers. 22,455 people entered Ecuador in March 2025 (13% more than the previous month), with a daily entry average of 724 Venezuelans. However, the most compelling trend is the exit figures which had a 20% increase as compared to the previous month, leaving a balance of -247 people who entered and left the country during the reporting period. According to Government data, 761 Venezuelans sought asylum in Ecuador in March 2025 (1,516 so far in the year), a 53% increase as compared to the previous month and less than the number reported in the same month in 2024 (1,085). 65% of people registered arrived in the country in families of two or more. Since 2022, Venezuela has accounted for approximately 45–50% of the asylum claims processed in Ecuador. This underscores both the continued need for support and the sustained interest in accessing international protection. Moreover, with the conclusion of the second phase of the regularization process, the asylum system has become increasingly relevant for individuals with protection needs. *Population entry and exit figures have been compiled by the GTRMs in Ecuador’s border areas (Tulcán, Lago Agrio, and Huaquillas) with qualitative and quantitative information on mixed movement trends. These figures are not triangulated with neighboring countries.*

**444,778** Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador<sup>2</sup>

**45%** estimated to be between 18 and 45 years old<sup>3</sup>

**25%** estimated to have a higher education degree<sup>3</sup>

### Main needs

**82%** access to food<sup>3</sup>

**67%** access to housing or shelter<sup>3</sup>

**57%** access to livelihoods or employment<sup>3</sup>

## Ecuadorians

Trends in Ecuadorian displacements have shifted, with this nationality dropping to the sixth to cross the Darien Jungle, according to [Panamanian authorities](#). 103,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims, globally, by mid- 2024.

## HUMANITARIANS AT WORK



**I'M ELI BASTIDAS, AND IN 2012 I EMBARKED ON A JOURNEY THAT TRANSFORMED MY LIFE. I STARTED AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT IN LAGO AGRIO, BUT MY PERSPECTIVE COMPLETELY CHANGED WHEN I BECAME A PROGRAM ASSISTANT—THERE, I DISCOVERED THE MAGNITUDE OF HUMANITARIAN WORK.**

**TRAVELING TO REMOTE COMMUNITIES ALLOWED ME TO UNDERSTAND THE REAL SITUATIONS OF REFUGEES, TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR REALITIES AS THEY FLED THEIR COUNTRY, AND TO WITNESS THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THEIR INTEGRATION WITH HOST COMMUNITIES.**

[Read the full story.](#)

## DELIVERING PROTECTION

### TULCÁN

#### Building local alliances to strengthen safeguards for violence survivors, children and adolescents



UNHCR convened 43 local authorities to strengthen protection of children, adolescents, and women survivors of violence in Carchi province. The dialogue enhanced coordination of care pathways and improved responses to violence. By fostering institutional collaboration, UNHCR reinforced local capacities to safeguard vulnerable groups, ensuring timely access to critical services and justice. This initiative highlights UNHCR’s commitment to protecting displaced and at-risk populations through systemic, community-driven solutions.

### OTAVALO

#### Mobile support teams bridge critical gaps in healthcare and food security for displaced people



UNHCR, HIAS Ecuador, WFP Ecuador, and COOPI deployed a mobile assistance unit to Otavalo’s 24 de Mayo Market, reaching 25 forcibly displaced people. The team provided vital information and support on healthcare, education, and food security. UNHCR’s leadership in multi-agency efforts ensures displaced populations receive integrated protection services, addressing immediate needs while promoting long-term resilience. These efforts, supported by ECHO and Japan, underscore UNHCR’s role in bridging gaps in essential service delivery for vulnerable communities.

### SANTO DOMINGO

#### Policy dialogues advance rights-based frameworks for displaced people



UNHCR participated in the 18th Provincial Human Mobility Roundtable in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, led by the Prefecture. The forum strengthened coordination to protect displaced people and uphold their rights. By collaborating with authorities, UNHCR amplified advocacy for inclusive policies and resource mobilization. This, done with support from Korea, ECHO and Japan, reflects UNHCR’s proactive role in fostering governance frameworks that prioritize protection, ensuring vulnerable groups access legal, social, and economic safeguards aligned with international standards.

## PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

### IBARRA

#### Empowering community spaces to bridge divides and share vital resources

UNHCR donated 30 chairs, three tables, and two tents to a neighbourhood council to strengthen community activities and foster peaceful coexistence between forcibly displaced people and host communities. By equipping local spaces, UNHCR, with support from Japan, enables inclusive gatherings that promote social cohesion and access to shared resources. This support underscores UNHCR’s commitment to enhancing basic service accessibility while building trust and collaboration among diverse groups.



### SAN LORENZO

#### Solar energy and medical supplies restore dignity in shelters

UNHCR provided a medical kit, rechargeable lamps, and solar lighting to the temporary shelter “Una Posada para Continuar la Vida,” improving living conditions for displaced families. These donations address urgent health and safety needs while ensuring reliable access to essential services like healthcare and electricity. UNHCR’s actions, done with support from Japan, prioritize dignity and stability for those forced to flee, aligning with efforts to bridge gaps in basic service provision.





## PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

### IBARRA

#### Entrepreneurship fairs ignite economic independence for displaced and local women



UNHCR marked International Women’s Day by organizing an entrepreneurship and services fair, engaging 30 forcibly displaced and Ecuadorian women. Over 600 attendees accessed information on programmes to advance women’s empowerment and economic independence. By creating platforms for skill-sharing and market access, UNHCR, with support from Korea, promotes access to local economies and break cycles of marginalization for women.

### GUAYAQUIL

#### Youth vocational training paves ways to formal employment



UNHCR launched the “Futuro en Movimiento” programme in Guayaquil, equipping 150 youth with vocational training in sales, customer service, inventory management, and logistics. This initiative bridges gaps in employability for displaced and vulnerable groups, connecting them to formal labour markets. UNHCR’s focus on youth empowerment drives long-term socioeconomic integration, striving to reduce poverty, protection risks and fostering self-reliance through targeted skill development.

### TULCÁN

#### Agricultural tools catalyze food security and livelihoods for local and refugee producers



UNHCR bolstered services for small-scale producers, including displaced people and Ecuadorians, in Carchi province by donating equipment to the District Directorate of Agriculture and Livestock. These tools enhance agricultural productivity and livelihoods, ensuring vulnerable groups sustainably access food security and economic opportunities. UNHCR’s intervention strengthens local systems to deliver equitable services, fostering resilience among marginalized communities.

### CUENCA

#### Legal empowerment fuels entrepreneurship in displacement-affected communities



In Cuenca, UNHCR partnered with Casa del Migrante to train 25 forcibly displaced people and host community members on municipal regulations for public and private land use. By equipping entrepreneurs with knowledge to navigate legal processes, UNHCR strengthens their capacity to secure permits and establish formal businesses. This initiative reduces barriers to economic participation, fostering self-reliance and integration into local markets. Through collaborative skill-building, UNHCR promotes inclusive growth, empowering forcibly displaced people to contribute sustainably to their host communities. This was possible thanks to the support from Japan and Korea.

## WEATHER-RELATED EVENTS

### NATIONAL

#### Emergency aid and resilience for communities affected by extreme weather events and environment disasters

In 2025, severe rainfall has impacted over 115,000 people in areas like Esmeraldas, Manabí, Pichincha, El Oro Guayas, among others, also affecting displaced populations and host communities. UNHCR is on the ground delivering emergency supplies—including shelter materials, hygiene kits, and essential household items—to mitigate immediate risks. By coordinating with local authorities, UNHCR ensures timely aid reaches the most vulnerable, addressing urgent needs while promoting resilience against weather-related shocks. Moreover, in light of the oil spill in Esmeraldas, UNHCR participated in a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination mission to assess needs and the environmental impact. The UNDAC team conducted a rapid needs assessment to identify humanitarian priorities in the water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, livelihoods, shelter, protection, and environmental sectors through key informant interviews. UNHCR, as lead of the local humanitarian team in Esmeraldas, coordinated with the UNDAC mission to contact government authorities, assess the impacts with visits to the affected territories, facilitate meetings with the local humanitarian team, review products, logistics, and provide physical spaces. This response underscores UNHCR’s role in safeguarding lives and livelihoods during extreme weather events, aligning with efforts to reduce displacement-driven vulnerabilities in crisis settings. [See more here.](#)



## PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

### SAN GABRIEL

#### Sports bridges divides, cultivating unity among displaced and host youth



In San Gabriel, UNHCR and partner FUDELA launched the Community Champions 2025 programme, engaging 60 forcibly displaced and Ecuadorian children and adolescents in football, basketball, and volleyball. The programme, done with the support from Japan, fosters social integration through teamwork, conflict resolution, and values promoting harmonious coexistence. By creating safe spaces for cross-cultural interaction, UNHCR combats xenophobia and stereotypes, nurturing mutual respect and solidarity among diverse communities.

### TULCÁN

#### Strokes of Unity: Recycled art initiative fights xenophobia and bridges communities



UNHCR organized an anti-xenophobia art initiative in Tulcán, where 40 forcibly displaced girls and local adolescents jointly expressed their perspectives through recycled-material paintings. This intercultural activity, supported by Korea, highlighted refugee-host community solidarity while celebrating women’s resilience. By creating shared artistic spaces, UNHCR, with support from Korea, fosters mutual understanding between displaced populations and host communities, transforming recycled resources into tools for social cohesion and women’s empowerment.

### ESPEJO

#### Public murals transform narratives on displacement



UNHCR unveiled a commemorative mural at San Isidro Educational Unit in Espejo for International Women’s Day, honoring the rights of displaced women and girls and their host communities. This public art project raises awareness about challenges faced by displaced women and girls, countering xenophobia through visibility and education. UNHCR’s advocacy positive narratives ensures displaced people are recognized as contributors to societal progress.



## Stories from the field

*"We decided to cultivate and commercialize chillangua because, despite its great flavor, it isn't very well-known around here". © UNHCR/Omar Ganchala*

## Leaf by leaf, Aracely and the women in her community build their dreams thanks to the chillangua



Aracely Pascal lives in El Obando, a parish located in the El Chical area on the Ecuadorian northern border with Colombia. In her free time, she enjoys walking, stating with laughter, "walking is relaxing." At 25 years old, Aracely is the president of the chillangua plant nursery 'Gotitas de Esperanza' ("Drops of Hope"), a women-led initiative that aims to promote empowerment and economic independence among women.

Chillangua, an aromatic herb endemic to Ecuador, is highly valued for its unique flavor in Ecuadorian cuisine, although it's not cultivated commercially. Known as an ancestral herb, chillangua grows alongside other products like sugarcane, arasa, borojó, guaba, and naranjilla in this border area. The chillangua has now become a source of income and a tool for indigenous Awá women in the community to make ends meet.

Supported by UNHCR and partner FUDELA, the group of entrepreneurial women received training to develop this project. "We had training sessions. Some women had sewing-related projects, for instance, but we decided to cultivate and commercialize chillangua because, despite its great flavor, it isn't very well-known around here," shares Aracely.

Initially, the group sold chillangua in leaf form, which posed a

challenge: "We harvested chillangua, but within a day, it wilted. If we didn't sell it on the same day, we'd lose it," Aracely explains. Thanks to the generous contribution of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea, Aracely acquired dehydrator machines, enabling them to dry, pulverize, and package chillangua into seasoning, similar to cilantro or cumin.

Through this innovative process, Aracely and the women involved in 'Gotitas de Esperanza' now sell their product to restaurants and customers who appreciate the value and history behind each jar of this ancestral herb. "At first, it was difficult, but now we know how to do it, and it's easier. Some colleagues were scared because we weren't growing, but others always encouraged us to expand and succeed," recounts Aracely.

Aracely's ultimate dream is for 'Gotitas de Esperanza' to continue growing—not only to help women achieve financial independence but also to share this herb that is deeply intertwined with her heritage, land, and birthplace.

"I advise all women not to hold back and to draw inspiration from our example. We are women, and we can be someone in life. I want my business to grow, even if it's little by little, to open a store and achieve my dreams," concludes Aracely.

**You can help us continue building a World of Possibilities for thousands of displaced people and their host communities in Ecuador. [Donate now.](#)**

**We thank the contributions of our donors**

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