UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR Protection Framework in Ecuador

ENHANCING PROTECTION AND SOCIAL COHESION FOR PEOPLE FORCED TO FLEE

KEY FIGURES 2025

81,195
Recognized refugees
(historical number 1985 - December 2025)

9,774
Asylum-seekers
60% Venezuelan 36% Colombian
(MoFA, Jan-Dec 2025)

3,240
recognized refugees
(MoFA, Jan-Dec 2025)

19,829
Net balance of irregular entries vs exits
(GTRM, estimate of Venezuelans entering in Ecuador as of November 2025, based on border-monitoring data on irregular entries and exits through the northern and southern borders.

316,000
Internally displaced people in Ecuador (2022 - 2024)
Ombudsperson of Ecuador, with UNHCR support

16,856
people registered by UNHCR and partners in proGres
by end of 2025

50,486
people assisted by UNHCR and partners
including with specialized services

The document outlines the key strategic protection actions that UNHCR Ecuador will prioritize in 2026. These actions are aligned with UNHCR's global policies and based on the current operational strategies in the country.

Strategic framework

Access to territory, registration & documentation → Refugee Status Determination → Community Engagement → Policy and Law

IT STARTS WITH ACCESS TO TERRITORY & IDENTIFICATION OF THOSE WITH PROTECTION NEEDS

People forced to flee are identified, registered and provided with protection services in accordance with their specific needs.

HOW UNHCR MAKES A DIFFERENCE

UNHCR combines direct, human-centered protection responses with system-level advocacy, data-driven analysis, and coordination across national and local actors. Its direct presence on the ground, technical expertise, and trusted partnerships across multiple stakeholders enable timely, rights-based solutions that both address immediate risks and strengthen sustainable protection systems in the long run.

UNHCR IN ECUADOR

- Works to ensure **safe access to territory and prevent *refoulement*** by strengthening national and local institutions, providing technical guidance on asylum, and responding directly to incidents thanks to its field presence and advocacy efforts.
- Offers accessible information and guidance—both in person and remotely—for individuals identified as in need, conducts **biometric registration** in proGres, and facilitates referrals to specialized services to ensure their rights are upheld.
- Supports immediate **reception and temporary accommodation through key partners, complementing state capacities and prioritizing people in vulnerable situations**.
- Provides **specialized protection interventions for survivors of violence**—especially women, children, and adolescents—through case management, psychosocial support, legal assistance, basic needs assistance, and coordination with national protection systems, while maintaining strong safeguards against sexual exploitation and abuse.

SAFEGUARDING THE RIGHT TO SEEK ASYLUM

People forced to flee access the asylum system and are guaranteed documentation and effective protection.

HOW UNHCR MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Seeking asylum is a fundamental human right under international law, requiring states to protect people fleeing persecution or serious harm. As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Ecuador ensures fair access to territory, proper claim processing, and respect for *non-refoulement*, dignity and non-discrimination. Ecuador hosts one of Latin America's strongest asylum systems, receiving large numbers of Colombian and Venezuelan refugees. For UNHCR, safeguarding access to asylum, legal assistance and community-based protection remains essential to uphold rights and support social cohesion and inclusion.

UNHCR IN ECUADOR

- Provides **information, guidance, and direct support,** especially for the most vulnerable, to ensure people in need of international protection can access and navigate asylum procedures.
- Supports **fair, efficient, and accessible asylum procedures** through quality monitoring, institutional capacity-building, staff deployments, and the use of mobile, virtual, and digital tools to enhance access.
- Works with competent authorities promotes access to **free, timely, and rights-based legal orientation and representation** in asylum procedures through public institutions and legal networks.
- Prioritizes targeted assistance to help refugees **obtain national identity documents,** thus enabling access to rights and integration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: PROMOTING SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

People forced to flee have access to mechanisms that guarantee their legal and physical protection.

HOW UNHCR MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Community-based protection and social cohesion efforts strengthen inclusive, resilient communities where displaced and host populations can live safely and with dignity. By empowering local structures to identify risks, prevent violence, and promote positive social norms—with meaningful participation of women, children and youth—UNHCR helps ensure these grassroots initiatives translate into concrete protection outcomes and access to services within national and local systems.

UNHCR IN ECUADOR

- Strengthens community protection networks and community-based organizations by supporting local leaders, promoters, and defenders to **improve self-protection mechanisms, early risk identification, and engagement with local authorities,** including first-line psychosocial support at community level.
- Promotes social cohesion and violence prevention through key activities such as **sports, arts, culture, and recreational activities that foster positive narratives locally,** peaceful coexistence, and shared responsibility for protecting women, children, and adolescents.
- Supports the **establishment and restoration of safe, inclusive, and violence-free community spaces** that serve as trusted entry points for community participation, service delivery, and activation of protection pathways.
- Prioritizes accountability to affected populations and communication with communities by **strengthening feedback, complaints, and response mechanisms, and promoting two-way communication** through community structures and networks.

POLICY AND LAW: STRENGTHENING LEGAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORKS

People forced to flee have access to mechanisms that guarantee their legal and physical protection.

HOW UNHCR MAKES A DIFFERENCE

UNHCR translates international and regional protection standards into concrete, operational practices at national and local levels, bridging the gap between legal frameworks and real access to rights. Through its mandated role, technical expertise, and sustained engagement with State institutions, justice bodies, and civil society, UNHCR strengthens protection systems from the policy level to frontline service delivery, ensuring more coherent, rights-based, and effective responses for people forced to flee.

UNHCR IN ECUADOR

- Promotes an enabling protection environment through **advocacy and interinstitutional coordination,** integrating international protection into public policies and local operational frameworks.
- **Strengthens the capacities of national and local authorities, justice entities, and oversight institutions** to identify, refer, and respond effectively to people in need of international protection, with particular attention to women, children, and adolescents.
- Supports the **activation and improvement of protection pathways and access to specialized services,** ensuring inclusive, timely, and coordinated responses within local protection systems.
- Advances **legislative and public policy reforms** by providing technical support for the development, adoption, and implementation of laws, guidelines, and institutional protocols related to asylum and forced displacement.

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

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