

"I did not understand what was happening,

but I was constantly aware of the changes and the need to adapt to new environments.

Jennifer, Colombian refugee

Ecuador

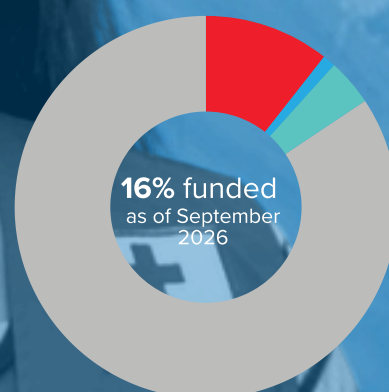
Operational Update
September 2026
No.9

Figures at a glance

Population figures

81,710 94% from neighbouring Colombia

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador²



65.1 M
required in 2026

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

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

Our 2026 response in figures

66,436 refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGres as of the end of September 2026



7,943

people supported with community - based protection services



7,651

people supported with collective emergency shelter



2,291

people assisted to cover their basic needs and protection



7,314

people supported with mental health and psychosocial support



320

people linked with a decent employment opportunity



2,461

people received hygiene kits



9,916

people received legal orientation & assistance to access asylum services



317

people provided with technical or skills certification

¹ Historical figure registered by the government since 1978 to the end of September 2026.
² UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of September 2026

Operational context

Ecuador continued to face a complex protection environment in September, marked by increased international protection needs, persistent insecurity, and ongoing natural disasters. Asylum trends indicate sustained pressure on national asylum and protection systems. The number of Colombian nationals registered as asylum seekers by the government during 2026 increased by 133% compared to the same period in 2025, reflecting the continued impact of displacement linked to armed conflict and violence in Colombia. At the same time, asylum claims from Venezuelan already reached 155% of the total recorded during 2025. These trends highlight the continued need for access to asylum procedures and protection services for people forced to flee.

The Government of Ecuador declared a new 60-day state of exception covering eight provinces and three municipalities and imposed a nightly curfew between 17 and 30 September in the coastal provinces of Guayas, Manabí, Los Ríos, and El Oro – some of the hardest hit by violence in the country. The measures form part of ongoing efforts to address violence associated with organized criminal groups. Despite enhanced security operations, including cooperation with international partners on border security and law enforcement, insecurity remains a concern in several provinces.

Natural disasters continued to affect several parts of Ecuador as the country entered the initial phase of the anticipated 2026-2027 El Niño phenomenon, with national authorities warning that its impacts could surpass those experienced in previous years. Heavy rainfall has caused flooding in Esmeraldas and Guayas provinces, affecting communities, damaging homes and livelihoods, and leading to temporary displacement, affecting both refugees and their host communities. Conversely, prolonged dry conditions contributed to an increase in forest fires across multiple provinces, including in Carchi and Pichincha. In response, UNHCR is coordinating with the National Risk Management Secretariat (SNGR), UN agencies, local authorities, civil society organizations, and communities to strengthen preparedness and facilitate access to assistance and protection services for populations at heightened risk, including refugees and host communities.

UNHCR continues to support access to asylum and protection services, strengthen community-based protection, and work with national and local authorities to identify and assist forcibly displaced people affected by insecurity, displacement, and disaster-related emergencies. UNHCR also maintained support for solutions and inclusion initiatives, while reinforcing coordination with partners to address evolving protection needs and pursue durable solutions for displaced communities across the country.

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

Colombians

According to government data, 709 Colombians applied for asylum in Ecuador in September 2026 (4,605 in 2026), representing a 5% increase compared to the previous month and a 249% increase compared to the same period last year. Ecuador continues to host one of the largest populations of Colombian refugees historically. Temporary closures of official crossing points and stricter controls have reduced mobility and access to territory, potentially discouraging people with international protection needs from seeking asylum.

Colombian households face significant protection needs, primarily related to unmet basic needs (30.6%), followed by lack of legal documentation (17.2%), limited access to services (12.2%), and children at risk of not attending school (7.9%), reflecting layered vulnerabilities affecting access to rights and essential services. Many report threats, persecution, intimidation, or direct violence, confirming that violence and armed conflict in Colombia remain key drivers of displacement. UNHCR projects an important number of asylums claims in 2026.

4,605 Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2026

- Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador: 56% access to housing
- 54% access to food
- 44% access to employment

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to represent the largest share of arrivals to Ecuador, while mobility trends remain relatively stable. In September, an estimated 19,048 people entered the country, representing a 3.1% increase compared to the previous month, with a daily average of 635 arrivals. During the same period, an estimated 15,859 people departed Ecuador, representing a 5.3% increase compared to August. As a result, the net migration balance stood at approximately 3,189 people who entered and remained in the country during the reporting period, indicating a moderate increase entries compared to previous month. (These figures are estimates based on available data and should not be considered official figures).

According to government data, 2,353 Venezuelans sought asylum in Ecuador in September 2026 (9,081 in 2026), an 81% increase compared to the previous month, and a 498% increase compared to the same month in 2025. Venezuelan asylum seekers currently represent 62% of all asylum applications processed in Ecuador in 2026, a trend that has been consistently observed since 2024, while in 2026 has already reached 155% of the total claims recorded by Venezuelans in 2025. This reinforces both the continued need for support and the sustained need to access international protection. Moreover, with no avenues for regularization, the asylum system has become increasingly relevant for those with international protection needs.

Population entry and exit figures have been compiled by the GTRMs in Ecuador's border areas with qualitative and quantitative information on mixed movement trends. These figures are not triangulated with neighboring countries.

440.450² Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador

45% between 18 and 45 years old

25% have a higher education degree

- Main needs of Venezuelans in Ecuador: 54% access to food
- 56% access to housing or shelter
- 44% access to livelihoods or employment

2. According to data estimated by the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish).
3. Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info

Ecuadorians

By end of 2025, over 122,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims, while over 5,000 had been recognized as refugees – the majority in the United States, Spain, Mexico and Italy (followed by Perú and Canada). These figures emerged amid a challenging security context, with Ecuador recording a homicide rate of 50.9 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2025. The Ombudspersons Office, with support from UNHCR and ECHO, launched a report on internal displacement in 2025 which estimates that over 315,000 Ecuadorians had been internally displaced between 2022 and 2024. [See the executive summary here.](#)



ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD

How UNHCR makes a difference:

UNHCR's strategy for 2026-2029 contributes to the ambitions of the High Commissioner's 50by35 agenda, which aims to reduce by half the number of refugees and others in need of international protection who remain dependent on humanitarian assistance in protracted displacement by 2035. Ecuador has already laid many of the foundations required to advance this vision through investments that link protection, inclusion and development. Building on this progress, UNHCR will support a continuum from protection to solutions through four main enablers: **status, stronger systems, skills and solutions.**



PROTECTION



Seeking asylum is a fundamental human right, and Ecuador has built one of the strongest asylum systems in the region to uphold it. UNHCR supports the Government by safeguarding access to territory and fair asylum procedures, providing legal and community-based protection, and translating international protection standards into real access to rights at the local level. Through its presence on the ground, technical expertise, data-driven analysis and coordination with national and local actors, UNHCR helps address immediate protection risks while strengthening sustainable protection systems.

[To learn more, check out protection fact sheet.](#)

IBARRA

International cooperation brings opportunities and solutions to local communities

The Fifth International Cooperation Fair, Territorial Edition, brought together international cooperation agencies, local governments, public institutions, academia, private sector representatives, and civil society organizations in Ibarra to strengthen partnerships and promote joint solutions to territorial challenges. Organized by Ecuador's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and the Municipality of Ibarra, the event featured forums, panel discussions, and networking spaces designed to connect knowledge, resources, and initiatives that create greater opportunities for communities across Ecuador, including forcibly displaced communities.



LAGO AGRIO

Community library opens doors to learning and participation

UNHCR, in collaboration with Sucumbíos Solidario and Fundación BÚHO, inaugurated the Bosque de Saberes Community Library at the Maloca de los Panas, where 200 books were delivered to create a welcoming space for reading, learning, and community participation for refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community members. UNHCR also provided Sucumbíos Solidario with an administrative manual for the use of the Maloca de los Panas, supporting local ownership of the space, strengthening its management, and reinforcing youth participation mechanisms within the community.



GUAYAQUIL

Access to information helps families identify pathways to protection

UNHCR conducted outreach and information brigades in Playas, Milagro, and Guayaquil, providing forcibly displaced people with information on asylum procedures, rights, available services, and regular pathways. In coordination with the Public Defender's Office and local partners including CDH, CEPAM, Manos Venezolanas, and the Comité Pro Mejoras Saucos 3, these activities helped communities access available protection services. This activity was made possible through the support of ECHO and KOICA.



MANTA

School counselors strengthen their ability to support at-risk children and adolescents

UNHCR, together with HIAS and Programa ESTUDIANDO, delivered a training to 25 education professionals from the Manta-Montecristi-Jaramijó district. Participants strengthened their knowledge of child protection, referral pathways, local service mapping, international protection, human mobility, psychological first aid, and UNHCR's Toolbox methodologies. The training contributes to strengthening schools' capacity to identify, prevent, and respond to protection risks affecting children and adolescents. This initiative was made possible through the support of KOICA.



GUAYAQUIL

Community services are reaching the people who need them most

UNHCR supported the opening of the Human Rights and Community Promotion Support Point in Guasmo Central in collaboration with CDH and Fundación Huancavilca. The new space brings information, guidance, and community-based services closer to residents while promoting social cohesion, community participation, and violence prevention in neighbourhoods facing heightened protection risks. This initiative was made possible through the support of KOICA.



GUAYAQUIL

Sports helping communities prevent violence against children

UNHCR together with CDH, and CEPAM organized a community wellbeing brigade during a Sports for Protection event that promoted participation and access to information. In addition, CDH concluded the School of Sports Promoters for Peace, a training process that strengthened the capacities of community sports coaches to integrate protection principles into their daily work, using sports as a tool to prevent violence and create safer environments for children and adolescents.



MANTA

Strengthening legal services for refugees and asylum-seekers

UNHCR conducted a workshop on international protection, human mobility, and first-line assistance for the Free Legal Aid Clinic of Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí. Through practical exercises and case-based learning, participants strengthened their capacity to support people seeking asylum and provide timely legal guidance, helping improve access to rights, information, and protection services for refugees and asylum-seekers. This activity was made possible through the support of KOICA.



MANTA

Art helps adolescents thrive in protective environments

UNHCR, together with Juana La Avanzadora, inaugurated a new arts school offering dance, guitar, and flute classes, bringing together more than 60 children and adolescents in a community space that promotes creativity, participation, and protection. In a complementary activity, UNHCR and HIAS facilitated sessions with 20 adolescents on the prevention of violence against women and girls, diversity, and peaceful coexistence, helping strengthen protective environments and equip young people with tools to identify and prevent violence. These initiatives were made possible through the support of KOICA.



GUAYAQUIL

Community leaders strengthen resilience while families build stronger connections

Through its partnership with UNHCR, Fundación Manos Venezolanas conducted a workshop on psychological first aid and stress management for volunteers and community leaders, strengthening resilience, psychosocial wellbeing, and the sustainability of community support networks. In addition, the organization held a recreational activity in Guayarte for children, adolescents, and their families, creating opportunities for safe recreation and community integration. This initiative was made possible through the support of KOICA.



CHICAL

Schools strengthen their response to prevent and address violence

UNHCR and the Ministry of Education strengthened the capacities of education personnel on referral pathways and response protocols for sexual violence through the participatory walk methodology. The training helped reinforce knowledge and practical skills to identify risks, activate protection mechanisms, and provide a timelier response for children and adolescents affected by violence.



CARCHI

Protection services reach border communities facing the greatest barriers

UNHCR, in coordination with the Directorate for International Protection, the Public Defender's Office, the Bolívar local government, the Ministry of Education, and other local actors, supported four protection brigades in Bolívar, Montúfar, Julio Andrade, and Chical. The brigades provided information and accompaniment on asylum procedures, visa processing, migration pathways, registration processes, legal assistance, referrals, and other protection services, while also identifying and managing cases involving violence, child protection concerns, unmet basic needs, and other protection risks. This joint UNHCR-Government efforts helps bring critical services closer to people who face significant barriers in accessing their rights and available support systems. This activity was made possible through the support of ECHO.



PROMOTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS



Forcibly displaced people are part of the solution for Ecuador's development. UNHCR works with national and local systems to promote their social and economic integration, supporting regular documentation, access to formal employment, education, entrepreneurship, financial services and ensuring misinformation and xenophobia are addressed at all levels. Advocating for inclusive policies, UNHCR helps refugees build sustainable livelihoods, fill labour gaps in key productive sectors, and contribute skills, taxes and innovation to the local economy.

GUAYAQUIL

Entrepreneurship creates new pathways to economic inclusion

UNHCR supported the participation of 12 forcibly displaced entrepreneurs in PYMES Ecuador 2026, an initiative led by the Vice Ministry of Production, Industry and Tourism to strengthen Ecuador's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Participants accessed business matchmaking opportunities that helped increase the visibility of their ventures, expand professional networks, and explore new market opportunities. The initiative was conducted thanks to the support of KOICA and forms part of UNHCR's efforts to promote durable solutions through economic inclusion and self-reliance through partnerships with public and private sector actors committed to local development.



MANTA

Skills and talent connect with real employment opportunities

UNHCR organized the Connecting Talent job fair with support from the InterAmerican Development Bank, bringing together 15 local companies offering 89 job openings to approximately 200 participants, including forcibly displaced people and host community members. Part of this effort, ULEAM delivered technical courses in areas such as customer service, food service, nursing assistance, laboratory services, and pharmacy support, helping participants strengthen their skills and access employment opportunities.



GUAYAQUIL

New partnerships expand access to training and employment

UNHCR, in collaboration with GIZ, launched the Refrigeration Assistant Training Programme, developed alongside DP World and implemented through allies such as Humboldt Zentrum to create new technical training opportunities for forcibly displaced people. The event also brought together the municipal company DASE, reinforcing collaboration between public and private sector actors to support skills development, employability, and economic inclusion. In Quito, a new agreement was signed to continue the programme with a second group of beneficiaries. This programme is done thanks to the support from KOICA.



IBARRA

Vocational training helps people access new employment opportunities

UNHCR supported a vocational training programme implemented through FUDELA in partnership with PUCE, the Municipality of Ibarra, the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Tourism, and GL Group. The programme provides training in accounting, finance, sales, cooking, and food service to 45 participants, including 70% forcibly displaced people and 30% members of the host community. Upon completion, participants will undertake professional internships at GL Group shopping centres, gaining practical experience and strengthening their access to employment opportunities.



“My story shows how it is possible to transform difficult experiences into a purpose centered on helping others.”
-Jennifer, Colombian refugee

When helping others becomes a purpose

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Jennifer was born in Colombia and arrived in Ecuador when she was five years old. Her memories of that time are tied more to people than places: her grandmother, her siblings, and the family bonds that gradually weakened when they were forced to flee. Over time, she came to understand that their departure was the result of the conflict, which directly affected her family, forcing them to flee and seek safety elsewhere.

Arriving in Ecuador did not bring immediate stability. Instead, it marked the beginning of a series of displacements and adjustments. “I didn’t fully understand what was happening, but I could feel... the constant change and the need to adapt to new environments,” Jennifer recalls.

Her childhood was marked by difficult experiences that had a lasting impact on her. For years, she struggled to understand what had happened, but as she grew older, she gained a new perspective on those experiences and recognized how certain forms of violence are often normalized within families and communities. Gradually, home became a place of safety rather than fear.

She focused on her education and found a way to build a different future for herself.

A turning point in her journey came through volunteering with the Red Cross. The experience helped her develop new skills, build confidence, and discover a strong sense of purpose. Working with children and adolescents showed her the importance of preventing violence and demonstrated how personal experiences can become powerful tools for supporting others.

Later, she received a scholarship to study Social Work, an achievement that transformed her life. For a long time, higher education had seemed beyond her reach, making this opportunity especially meaningful.

She treasures the memories of her life with her family in Colombia while embracing the life she has built in Ecuador. “I keep photos from when I first arrived in Tulcán, family memories, and a Red Cross doll that symbolizes the impact volunteering has had on my life,” she says. Today, Jennifer hopes to work with vulnerable populations, particularly children and young people.

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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