

2022 REVIEW

Ecuador Operational Update

N.1 | January 2023

Daniel, his wife Mirvic and their daughter Daniela left Venezuela four years ago. This musically inclined family now run a music school in the outskirts of Quito which now brings together some 140 refugee, migrant and local children.
Photo: UNHCR/Diana Díaz Rodríguez

Figures at a glance

Population figures

74,320 **96%** from neighbouring Colombia

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador¹

59,744

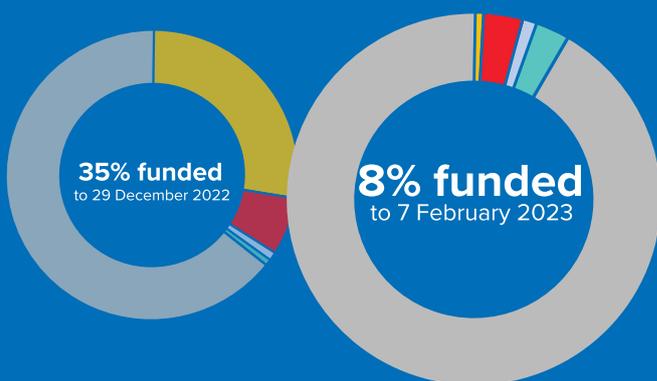


refugees with active cases registered on UNHCR's database¹

Our 2022 response in figures

530,802

refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of December 2022



76.1M required in 2022 | **76M** required in 2023

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

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

85,839  people received legal guidance & assistance

27,742  people assisted with cash for basic needs & protection

18,875  people supported with emergency shelter

2,930  people provided with entrepreneurship or business training

47,590  people received hygiene kits

7,578  GBV survivors supported

¹ Historical figure registered by the government. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of 2022.

Operational context

In 2022, Ecuador continued to be a country at the center of multiple and often overlapping population displacements. Both a transit and destination country, this Andean country closed the year with over 74,000 recognized refugees, one of the highest figures in the region, 96% of whom had fled neighboring Colombia. Historically, Ecuador is the main country of asylum for Colombian refugees in the world and continues to receive a significant amount of people forced to flee from that country to date. Additionally, Ecuador remains host to the third largest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela in the region, with 502,200 currently residing in the country, according to the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM).

Being host to a significant number of refugees and others displaced – accounting to around 3 percent of its entire population – as well as bearing witness to ongoing mixed and onward movements heading north and south of the continent, Ecuador’s infrastructure and resources have struggled to cater for the needs of both refugees and locals. This was particularly strenuous in a slow post-pandemic recovery and a deteriorating security in some parts of the country, coupled with disasters and other climate related events. Moreover, while people from other countries continued to arrive in Ecuador in search of protection, a significant number of Ecuadorians left the country heading north, becoming one of the main populations registered to have crossed the dangerous Darien Gap in 2022.

In the midst of a widening poverty gap, refugees and migrants continue to face barrier in accessing basic rights. According to the Joint Needs Assessment issued in 2022, the main needs of refugees and migrants include access to food (82.8%), followed by shelter (64.4%) and employment/livelihoods (52.6%), the last being vital to ensure access to the first two.

The ripple effects of the armed conflict in Ukraine around the globe, including in Ecuador, further reduced employment opportunities and increased vulnerability, especially for those who already face barriers to integration for documentation issues, xenophobia, labour exploitation and abuse.

In response to integration barriers faced by refugees and migrants in the country, particularly by Venezuelans, the Government of Ecuador began to implement a generous regularization process decreed on 1 June 2022. By the end of the year, thousands had received a visa and ID with many more – those who had entered irregularly to the country – awaiting the commencement of the final registration phase (see page three for more details).

In 2022, UNHCR continued providing lifesaving, protection and integration support to people forced to flee arriving in the country as well as those still in extremely vulnerable conditions. Building on its decades-long experience in the country, UNHCR focused on strengthening the response to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers with an emphasis on protection, integration, antixenophobia, enhancing their access to the asylum system, emergency shelter and financial assistance through multi-purpose cash grants to meet their basic needs. Moreover, the UN Refugee Agency strengthened its preparedness response to support protection and solutions for refugees and their hosts in disaster situations, integrating environmental considerations in planning and preparedness for emergency response.

In 2023, UNHCR will reinforce its protection and integration response, mainly within communities, where refugees and migrants can contribute their skills to the socioeconomic development of the country.

Main populations forced to flee hosted by Ecuador

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 445,388 people entered Ecuador in 2022, with a daily entry average of 1,220 Venezuelans.

Colombians

The arrival of Colombians in need of international protection continues, with 4,280 in 2022. 300 Colombians sought asylum in the country in December fleeing renewed violence in some parts of their country of origin.

502,200 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador²

73% estimated to be in an irregular status³

42% estimated to be between 26 and 35 years old³

23% estimated to have a higher education degree⁴

4,280 Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2022²

300 were registered in December

Main needs

83% access to food³

64% access to housing or shelter³

53% access to livelihoods or employment³

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

69% access to food, housing, clothing⁵

24% access to employment and services⁵

6% access to documentation⁵

² According to data estimated by UNHCR and its partners within the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish)

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

⁴ Third R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info

⁵ 2021 Protection Monitoring available at our [data portal](http://data.portal)

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

According to the latest joint need assessment¹, a high proportion of this population is in an irregular situation (73 per cent). Their irregular status affects their access to services and to the formal labor market, exposing them to protection risks and limiting their socio-economic integration prospects. In this context, the broad Registration and Regularization exercise announced by the Government is key for enabling the needs of this population to be met and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socio-economic integration strategy.

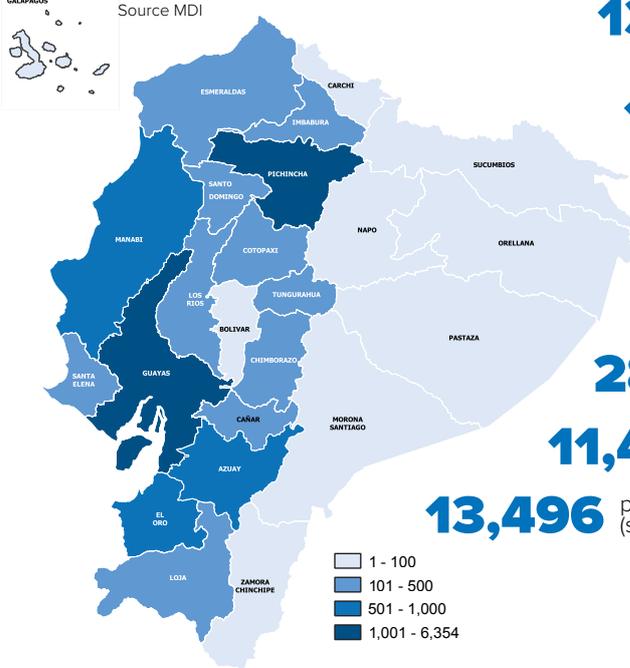
As provided by Decree 436/22, the first phase of the Registration and Regularization initiative started in 2022, with the registration of foreigners living in Ecuador with an irregular status, together with the opportunity for them to obtain a temporary stay permit (Certificado de Permanencia Migratoria) that allow a regular stay in the territory until a regularization option is made available.

The first phase of registration, which began with Decree 436, is meant to register all Venezuelans and other foreigners as well as to regularize 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.

Regularization of Venezuelans who entered regularly began on 1 October, and over 51,542 visa applications had been lodged, over 38,667 visas had been granted and almost 26,000 ID cards had been delivered by 3 February.

Registration continues, with some 141,000 people having appointments for their biometric registration and over 101,000 people who have a stay permit, by 3 February 2023.

Province of residence per VIRTE visa applicant



134,590 people registered through the official website (source: MDI)

130,726 people with appointments for biometric registration (source: MDI)

95,624 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

41,182 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

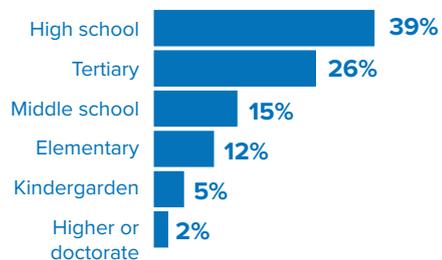
28,888 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

11,444 people with appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

13,496 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

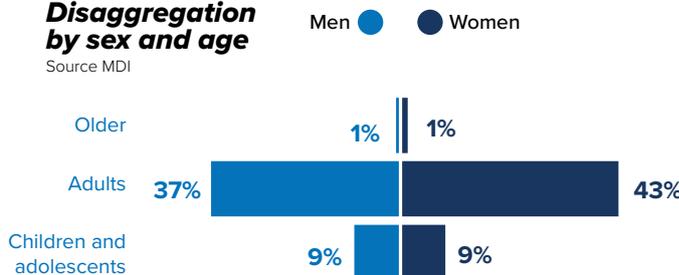
Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



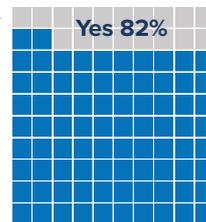
Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

Source MDI



Desire to stay

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



NATIONAL

How UNHCR has supported the regularization process

In March 2022, UNHCR donated technological equipment to the Ministry of Government to support registration efforts of refugees and migrants. This contribution included 10 voice recorders, more than 150 webcams, more than 150 UPS and 70 fingerprint readers.

After the issuance of the presidential decree, UNHCR as co-lead of the Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) along with other organizations reiterated their support to the Government of Ecuador in the regularization process, and offered their expertise, capacity, presence and resources to keep strengthening the process and ensure no-one was left behind.

In addition, UNHCR, together with IOM, supported the Ecuadorian Government by hiring personnel for the regularization process who currently work directly in relevant institutions. 24 people were hired for the Ministry of Economic

and Social Inclusion, 70 for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and 79 people for the Ministry of Interior.

UNHCR also supported the regularization process through brigades carried out by the Public Defender’s Office, which helped over 2,000 people between September and December 2022 with registration. In this effort, the Public Defender’s Office conducted mobile brigades throughout the country, including remote rural areas at the northern and southern borders, to provide information and legal advice to refugees and migrants and thus facilitate their access to the regularization process.

UNHCR also participated in the design and implementation of the communication campaign called ‘Estoy Aquí’ (I’m Here), which seeks to raise awareness about the regularization process and encourage refugees and migrants residing in Ecuador to take part.

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

UNHCR, partners register the needs of over 100,000 people in 2022



The registration of refugees and migrants is crucial for UNHCR and its partners to tailor the response to their specific needs. Through 2022, UNHCR and partners carried out a total of 104,000 new registrations of displaced people in Ecuador. 96 per cent of these were carried out by partners HIAS, Plan International and NRC, while 4 percent was carried out directly by UNHCR. In total, UNHCR Ecuador’s Operations Unit has 508,000 individual registrations, making it the largest registration operation in the Americas. The average monthly registration during 2022 was 8,600 new registrations, accounting for a slight decrease from 2021, when the monthly average was 9,800.

The identification of specific protection needs remained high in 2022, with legal and physical protection being the main identified need. 36 per cent of people registered reported inability to meet their basic needs, while 40 per cent lacked legal documentation. A high 13 per cent of children were at risk of not attending school.

In 2023, UNHCR will progressively move towards registering refugees and others displaced directly in an effort to provide a closer response to those most in need.

NATIONAL

UNHCR, DPIN conduct brigades to bring protection services closer to refugees



UNHCR supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Directorate of International Protection (DPIN) to conduct mobile brigades to provide services to asylum seekers and refugees living in remote areas. In 2022, several brigades were organized in different parts of Ecuador, including remote areas in the Northern border like San Lorenzo, Lago Agrio or Chical, benefiting displaced people from Colombia and Venezuela, including children, people with disabilities, and older refugees. 2,133 people were supported during these brigades in 2022. In addition, women refugee community leaders were key to facilitate communication and reception during these brigades, carried out alongside UNHCR’s partners. These brigades will continue in 2023 to further strengthen the Government’s response to people in need of international protection.

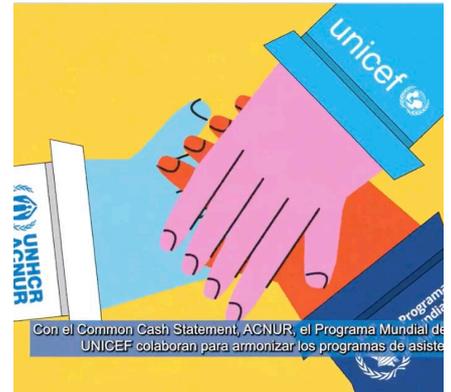
PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

NATIONAL

UNCCS benefits over 25,000 displaced people in Ecuador

The UNCCS (United Nations Common Cash Statement) is a global inter-agency initiative that aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations system’s cash transfer programme. In Ecuador, the UNCCS has been operating since 2021 thanks to the coordinated work of UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

Since then, over 25,000 refugees and migrants have benefited from the assistance coordinated in the framework of the UNCCS, which helped deliver a dignified and efficient process to cover their basic needs like documentation, food, rent, health, education, among others. UNCCS has facilitated a common registry that prevents people from telling their stories multiple times and has established a joint route that facilitates the delivery of complementary assistance, avoiding duplication. The Statement has also allowed the agencies to seek a common financial service provider, thus avoiding delivering assistance through multiple channels. [Find out more.](#)



NATIONAL

‘Breathing Inclusion’ methodology continued to help prevent discrimination in schools during 2022

UNHCR and partners trained 1,338 people in 127 educational units across Ecuador on the ‘Breathing Inclusion’ methodology in 2022. This initiative, created by UNHCR in 2013, provides tools to prevent violence, discrimination and xenophobia against refugee and migrant children in schools. The methodology helps teachers teach students how to recognize multiple identities, to learn about the benefits of diversity, to take a critical look at prejudice and the importance of ensuring equality and social justice.

During 2022, the project was complemented by ‘La Educación es el Camino’ programme, funded by Education Cannot Wait and implemented by UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF. Thanks to this, 1,397 people received educational kits to guarantee their permanence in the school system in the provinces of Pichincha, Manabí, Tungurahua and Santo Domingo while an additional 288 students received psychological and pedagogical support.



PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

NATIONAL

Private sector engaged in promoting refugee inclusion in Ecuador



Since 2021, UNHCR and the United Nations Global Compact Ecuador are leading “Empresas con Personas Refugiadas” (or Companies with Refugees), an initiative to promote the role of the private sector in the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees and their host communities. Since then, dozens of private sector companies have joined this effort and, by the end of the year, 60 had been awarded the Inclusive Company Seal. The initiative recognizes the efforts of small, medium and large companies in promoting the inclusion of refugees.

Learn more about the [Inclusive Company Seal initiative.](#)



Learn more about [Companies With Refugees.](#)

NATIONAL

Enhancing the inclusion of refugees in collaboration with local governments



In 2022, UNHCR continued to strengthen cooperation with municipalities as a fundamental component to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in local economies. Working with decentralized autonomous governments (GAD), UNHCR has established partnerships with their Local Economic Development Agencies to boost employment, entrepreneurship and innovation. So far, UNHCR has partnerships with CorpoAmbato (Ambato), CONQUITO (Quito), EPICO (Guayaquil), EDEC (Cuenca), which had expanded opportunities for hundreds of refugees and migrants who have received training to improve their businesses or skills for employment.

Moreover, UNHCR has provided technical assistance to strengthen public access to employment and entrepreneurship services and complements the interventions of municipalities with seed funding and equipment. Over 1,900 public officials and private sector actors have been trained in refugee inclusion.

In 2023, UNHCR will continue its joint work with local governments to keep facilitating access to durable solutions to refugees and other displaced people in the country.

CLIMATE ACTION

ESMERALDAS

Refugees, locals and organizations chip in to preserve the environment



In Esmeraldas city, the Ministry of Environment, Ocean Clean and 3,000 community volunteers held a beach clean-up day, as part of a national strategy to preserve the environment. Over 55,600 kilos of waste and trash were collected.

NATIONAL

UNHCR delivered humanitarian assistance to people affected by natural disasters



UNHCR delivered humanitarian assistance to people affected by natural disasters such as the tremors in Esmeraldas and Carchi, the floods in La Gasca (Quito), or the fires in Borbón.

NATIONAL

UNHCR engages communities in addressing and combating climate change

UNHCR is working with refugee and local families and leaders in communities in northern provinces in addressing climate change. In Lago Agrio, UNHCR met with teachers, students, parents and others to implement the Guardians of the Ecosystem project and raise awareness on climate action. In Chical, UNHCR is collaborating with the International Organization on Bamboo (Inbarlac) and Somos Foundation to find innovative ways to use bamboo as a sustainable resource to build community centres. In Tulcán, UNHCR supports a recycling project that allows refugees and Ecuadorians to generate income for their families while caring for the environment. In addition, on the outskirts of the city, UNHCR and the Municipality of Tulcán placed a net in the river to capture waste that accumulates in the water. This will keep the river clean, while the recyclers collect the garbage.



PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

UNHCR and supporter Nikki Mackliff launch song in solidarity with refugees



UNHCR and Guayaquil-born singer-songwriter Nikki Mackliff launched the song ‘Un mundo posible’ in solidarity with the thousands of refugees in Ecuador.

The official videoclip was launched on [YouTube](#) during commemorations for World Refugee Day in 2022 and the song is now available in all music streaming platforms, including [Spotify](#). UNHCR will continue engaging Nikki Mackliff in 2023 in helping raise awareness on refugees.

NATIONAL

LGBTIQ+ Pride Parades with refugees



UNHCR, refugees and migrants joined locals in the 2022 Pride Parade in Quito and Ambato. With a 12 metre long flag in Quito and other visibility material, dozens of people took to the streets to march for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people around the world who have been forced to flee because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

NATIONAL

More than 4.000 refugees and locals laughed with Clowns Without Borders



UNHCR and the NGO Clowns Without Borders toured Ecuador and brought laughter to more than 4,000 refugee and Ecuadorian children and adolescents in Quito, Lago Agrio, Pimampiro, Otavalo, Guayaquil, Machala and Huaquillas. With magic tricks and acrobatics, Clowns Without Borders visited these locations with a message of inclusion and solidarity for those who have had to find a new home in Ecuador.

The Clowns Without Borders show was accompanied by artistic presentations and traditional dances that children and adolescents performed on each of the stages. Laughter and applause were the main ingredient in each of the shows.

See more about this [initiative here](#).

NATIONAL

Solidarity initiatives



On the Other Side. [Learn more.](#)



Somos Inclusión. [Learn more.](#)



Me tuve que ir. [Learn more.](#)



RefugiArte. [Learn more.](#)



Interagency campaign HUMANX. [Learn more.](#)

QUITO

UNHCR joined ContraCorriente to awareness about forced displacement



10 hours of music with a message of inclusion and solidarity for refugees filled the [ContraCorriente festival](#) in Quito, a platform where artists from different Latin American countries joined the effort to build a world in solidarity with people forced to flee. Three stages and more than 10,000 attendees filled Itchimba Park in this event with a message was integration and respect to diversity.

ContraCorriente was also the ideal space to show the RefugiArte exhibition and where people were able to feel what it is like to be [On the Other Side](#) and walk a mile in Arianna’s shoes in the 360 movie.

Stories from the field

Former members of orchestras system in Venezuela spread the power of music in Ecuador



[▶ Learn more about Daniel](#)

Daniel directs a music school which has helped bring together over 140 children of many nationalities. Photo: UNHCR/Diana Díaz Rodríguez

QUITO

Daniel Bracho never fathomed he would one day leave his life behind. But the unavoidable decision came when he had to leave his hometown in Venezuela with his wife Mirvic and their 4 month old daughter at the time. “We came here with empty hands and a bag filled with dreams,” said Daniel. “We struggled a lot but I always knew that I wanted to do.” His answer: Music. Daniel and Mirvic has been part of Venezuela’s System of Youth Orchestras and Choirs so it came naturally for them to dream children can experience the transformative power of music.

“I owe everything to music - I used to be a kid on the streets. But when I was introduced to music, it saved me,” mentioned Daniel. It is also where he met the love of his life. Four years after their arrival to Ecuador, Daniel and Mirvic founded the Centro de Estudios Musicales José Antonio Abreu where children of all ages and backgrounds could study music and potentiate their skills, including refugees, migrants and locals. To date, this music school has managed to create a sense of community among refugees, migrants and locals, having already welcomed over 140 students living in Pomasqui and surrounding areas - including local children living at an orphanage. “We want to reach each corner of Ecuador and save as many children as we can,” said Mirvic.

In 2022, ConQuito and UNHCR launched in the “Quito Inclusivo” programme open for associative entrepreneurship proposals led by civil society organizations focusing on generating opportunities for refugees and migrants. This music school was one of the winners of the seed capitals delivered through the programme. With the seed capital, the school is purchasing extra instruments to deliver to children who cannot afford them.

You can help people like Daniel who had to leave their homes and now dream of rebuilding their lives. [Donate now.](#)

We thank the contributions of our donors

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