UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Ecuador
Operational Update

N.3 | March-August 2023

Omaira fled Colombia several years ago a dis now a community leader building hope for all residents in her new home as she creates a world of possibilities. Photo: UNHCR/Diana Diaz

Figures at a glance

Population figures

75,803
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

96% from neighbouring Colombia

61,984
refugees with active cases registered in ProGres[1]

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

Our 2023 response in figures

121,898
refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of August 2023

45,456
people received legal guidance & assistance

14,836
people assisted with cash for basic needs & protection

9,257
people supported with collective emergency shelter

509
people provided with technical or skills certification

630
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

12,812
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

23,926
people received hygiene kits

2,189
GBV survivors supported

1 Historical figure registered by the government to the end of June 2023. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of August 2023.

Operational context

The registration and regularization process continued its course during the first semester of the year. During this time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility published a new decree that opened the way for the regularization of Venezuelan citizens who entered through irregular border points and who comply with the registration process until 15 August 2023. Additionally, at the end of July, the second phase of the regularization process began for people of all nationalities who entered Ecuador regularly but who are in an irregular situation. UNHCR and other UN agencies and programmes continue to support the process promoted by the National Government and notify people of the closing date of the registration process (see page 3 for more updates).

In the month of May, President Guillermo Lasso decreed 'crossed death', resulting from the internal commotion that the country was experiencing. Through this recourse, the National Assembly was dissolved the National Electoral Council was ordered to call early elections so that, within a period of 6 months, a new president and a new National Assembly take office. Elections took place on 20 August, and it is expected that the new government will take office by December.

Security conditions in the country continue to deteriorate. Between January and June, 3,513 murders have been registered, a 58% increase compared to the same period in 2022. The murder of the mayor of Manta at the end of July and of the presidential candidate in early August, add to homicides of other politicians, lawyers, judges, as well as other crimes like robbery, extortion and drug trafficking that are most frequently reported in Esmeraldas, Manta, Huaquillas, Guayaquil, Quevedo, among other cities in the country. This situation affects both refugees and Ecuadorians living in these areas.

Natural disasters and the effects of climate change were stronger in areas like Esmeraldas, which suffered unprecedented flooding. After 12 continuous hours of rain, more than 11,789 people were affected, representing a total of approximately 3,000 families and their homes. Esmeraldas is a province with a high presence of refugees and others in need of international protection, mainly from neighboring Colombia. To manage the crisis and following an official request from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, the Country Humanitarian Team was activated. UNHCR has provided kits, support for temporary shelters, among other assistance.

See: ***Forced displacement to Ecuador, national trends report***

Ecuador continues to be at the center of multiple and simultaneous human displacements, whose mobility towards the south and north of the continent remains complex. In addition to being a destination country for one of the highest numbers of refugees in Latin America and home to the third highest number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, it is also the transit country for people from other continents. This adds to the thousands of Ecuadorians who are increasingly leaving, largely due to the general deterioration of Ecuador's socioeconomic situation. Read the report here.

Main populations forced to flee hosted by Ecuador

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 120,288 people entered Ecuador between March and August 2023, with a daily entry average of 801 Venezuelans. This represents a 33% decrease as compared to the same period in 2022.

474,945 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador[2]

- **45%** estimated to be between 18 and 45 years old[3]
- **25%** estimated to have a higher education degree[3]

Main needs

- **82%** access to food[3]
- **67%** access to housing or shelter[3]
- **57%** access to livelihoods or employment[3]

Colombians

3,510 Colombians were registered in need of international protection so far in 2023, 2,825 between March and August, 72% of whom were families with children. This accounts for a 32% increase as compared to the same period in 2022. July has been the month with the highest recorded number so far this year, with 635 asylum seekers.

3,510 Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2023[2]

- **2,825** were registered between March and August

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

- **81%** access to food, housing, clothing[4]
- **12%** access to employment and services[4]
- **5%** access to documentation[4]

2 According to data estimated by UNHCR and its partners within the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish) and government figures.
3 Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info
4 2022 Protection Monitoring available at our data portal

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

According to the joint need assessment conducted in 2023, a high proportion of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador was in an irregular situation (76 per cent) - not considering provisions like the permanence or stay certificate obtained through the current regularization process which at the time of the survey had not began its third phase - and facing obstacles in accessing the formal labour market, exposing them to protection risks and limiting their socio-economic integration prospects. In this context, the broad Registration and Regularization exercise has been key in enabling the needs of this population to be met and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socio-economic integration strategy.

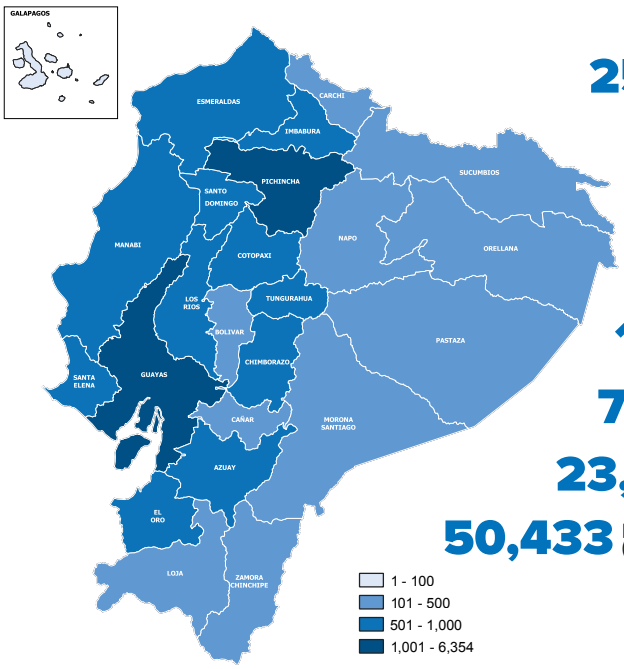
As provided by Decree 436/22, the first phase of the Registration and Regularization initiative started in 2022, with the registration of foreigners living in Ecuador with an irregular status, together with the opportunity for them to obtain a temporary stay permit (Certificado de Permanencia Migratoria)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

The first phase of registration started registering and regularizing all 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. The registration phase ended on 15 August.

Regularization of Venezuelans who entered regularly began on 1 October, while the process for other foreigners began on 12 July. By 15 september, 110,633 visa applications had been lodged, 73,146 visas had been granted and 50,433 ID cards had been delivered, while over 201,000 people have a stay permit, by 15 September.

Province of residence per VIRTE visa applicant

Source MDI



258,682 people registered through the official website (source: MDI)

248,420 people with appointments for biometric registration (source: MDI)

201,711 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

110,633 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

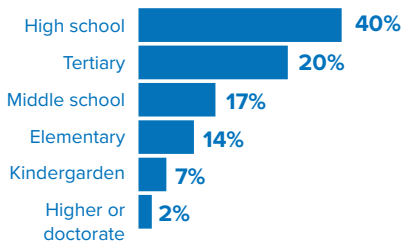
73,146 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

23,744 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

50,433 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

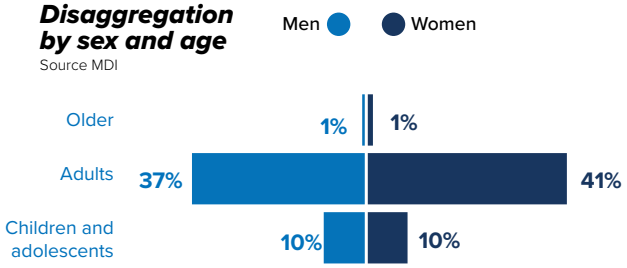
Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

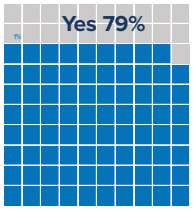
Source MDI

24 MIES **70** MREMH **79** MDI

Desire to stay

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

Source MDI



This infographic was created jointly by UNHCR and IOM, co-leads of the Interagency Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) providing technical support to the government in carrying out the regularization process in Ecuador. This infographic was created with information provided by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility to 15 September 2023.

NATIONAL

How UNHCR has supported the regularization process

UNHCR and partners continue providing support to the regularization process with counselling and guidance, communications with communities, cash for documentation, as well as key staff in government institutions and brigades to support registration and any other related procedure. So far in 2023, over 69,000 have been supported since the process started.

*See: **Here are three things UNHCR does in Ecuador***

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

Brigades to support access to vital documentation

UNHCR has conducted brigades alongside the Ministry of Foreign Affair's DPIN and partners across the country, to help bring key services like document and visa renewals closer to refugees. So far in 2023, over 1,800 people were able to benefit from these brigades in San Lorenzo, Esmeraldas, Lago Agrio, Machala and Santo Domingo.

NATIONAL

Feeling Proud in Ecuador

When it comes to the right to enjoy asylum, there is no room for homophobia, transphobia and biphobia. On Pride Day and everyday, UNHCR will always fight for everyone's right to safety, including forcibly displaced LGBTIQ+ people.

In **Quito**, UNHCR once again joined the Pride parade with a 12-metre long flag to make sure everyone knows people forced to flee because of their sexual orientation or gender identity have the right to seek asylum. In addition, staff were engaged in a discussion to learn what UNHCR does to protect LGBTIQ+ people forced to flee.

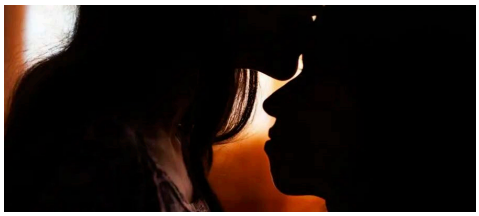
In **Ambato**, UNHCR joined the Pride parade and festival and participated in the training for tour operators of the canton with the goal of finding accessible, inclusive, and friendly spaces for LGBTIQ+ people.

In **Esmeraldas**, UNHCR joined Red Badeas in painting an LGBTIQ+ flag in public spaces as an effort to promote inclusion and respect.

In **Tulcan**, UNHCR and Aldeas SOS supported a group of refugee and migrant teens in presenting a dance to commemorate Pride.

NATIONAL

UNHCR-HIAS report: 93 percent of women in human mobility in Ecuador suffered gender violence during their displacement



Latin America is one of the most unsafe regions in the world for women and with high levels of gender-based violence, a situation that worsens in the context of forced displacement. According to a benchmark study by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and HIAS, refugee women are seriously affected by sexual violence, even above the average for Ecuador. Read more here.

NATIONAL

Preventing gender-based violence alongside refugees and authorities

Tackling gender-based violence is a task best done in collaboration. UNHCR provided training to 12 refugee women in **El Angel** to reflect on key issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, including division of labour, inequality and change in gender roles during and after displacement. In addition, UNHCR and the Council for the Protection of Rights Quito trained 9 staff from the Rights Protection Network in **Espejo** to strengthen their efforts to prevent and manage cases of gender-based violence. In **Tulcan**, UNHCR and Aldeas SOS trained 14 refugee teens on how to prevent gender-based violence. In **Manta**, UNHCR donated equipment to the Ministry of Women and Human Rights to strengthen the services provided to survivors through Centros Violeta. In **Lago Agrio**, UNHCR supported Mujeres de Sucumbios Federation in an art-therapy session to support gender-based violence survivors in expressing their experiences.

NATIONAL

Toolbox helps enhance the protection of refugees in Ecuador

UNHCR, the Constitutional Court, Unicef, UN Women and Universidad Catolica launched the first online course on the toolbox created by the organizations to protect refugees in Ecuador. This initiative aims to provide practical guidance to staff involved in the justice system and civil society on how to protect the rights of refugees.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

NATIONAL

Promoting inclusion in schools through participatory methodologies

Across the country, UNHCR continues implementing Respiramos Inclusion, a methodology that provides schoolteachers with tools to address the complexities of integrating forcibly displaced children and to promote peaceful interactions among peers. In Lago Agrio, UNHCR and Fudela trained 29 teachers in the Oriente Ecuatoriano School so they could promote diversity and peace. In Esmeraldas, UNHCR trained 36 teachers on the methodology as well as on international protection and the right to education. This methodology was designed by UNHCR and implemented in the framework of the Multiyear Resilience Programme (MYRP) and Educación es el Camino initiatives, supported by Education Cannot Wait, the Government of Canada and Koica.

NATIONAL

Hundreds of refugees and Ecuadorians accessed basic services

In Quito, UNHCR, with support from Koica, donated medical equipment to support the delivery of healthcare to refugees and migrants. The donated equipment, which are destined for eight health centres, included weight scales, hemoglobinometers, gynecological tables, doppler, portable ultrasound machines, fetal monitors, oximeters, blood pressure monitors, glucometers and stethoscopes. This donation was possible thanks to the support fom Koica.

Learn more about the support provided by Koica to the response in Ecuador.

NATIONAL

Strengthening the provision of shelter for refugees

Temporary shelters are an essential part of the humanitarian response. With support from the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Casa Grande University, UNHCR trained 20 staff in management of shelters from a protection perspective to strengthen their capacity to deliver safe collective shelter services.

PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

NATIONAL

UNHCR, Global Compact and Sin Fronteras Programme launch second edition of Inclusive Company Seal

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the United Nations Global Compact, Red Ecuador and the Sin Fronteras Program presented the second edition of the 'Inclusive Company Seal', which seeks to recognize private sector actors who promote an inclusive business culture and the socioeconomic integration of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons in Ecuador.

In 2022, 60 companies from various sectors were recognized with the Inclusive Company Seal and received technical advice on inclusion and rights issues, free access to the job bank of the Sin Fronteras programme, practical hiring guides and catalogues of products and services, among other benefits.

NATIONAL

Refugees and migrants have greater access to housing facilities thanks to new decree

Following the joint advocacy between UNHCR and the Inter-American Development Bank, the Ministry of Housing of Ecuador published a new decree so that refugees or people with humanitarian or exceptional visas can access housing options under a "lease with option to buy" regime", and will be able to apply for mortgage loans for social/public housing (considering their credit history abroad).

NATIONAL

Fairs open opportunities for job search and business promotion

In **Ambato,** in the framework of Companies with Refugees, UNHCR and the National Institute for Social Security launched Emplearte Fair where 150 refugees submitted their CV to 14 companies and learned how to sign up for social security as part of their right to work. In addition, Corpoambato and UNHCR began the Learning to Thrive 3.0 programme with 40 participants. In **Ibarra**, in collaboration with the subroundtable on employability of GTRM, UNHCR held an event where 30 companies learned of best practices of inclusive initiatives within the private sector, and refugees displayed their products and services. Moreover, in the same city, UNHCR, NRC and Universidad Católica trained refugee and local small business owners on technology to better promote their products online. In **Lago Agrio**, UNHCR and HIAS, in the framework of Compra con Propósito, held a business conference with 11 companies and 19 refugee and local small business owners to present products and reach commercial agreements.

Meet: **Geizy and her husband, who received support to expand their quail eggs business. They are now able to sell at least 3,000 eggs a week.**

CLIMATE ACTION

NATIONAL

Building leaderships to improve community structures and protect the environment

UNHCR and partners across the country have been engaging refugees, migrants and Ecuadorians in initiatives that promote recycling and leadership skills, to support integration and protect the environment. In **Ibarra,** UNHCR and Fudela began training a group of 20 refugees, migrants and Ecuadorians part of the Priorato neighbourhood on leadership and motivation and delivered them with uniforms to formally undertake their recycling work. The group is now a legally registered association thanks to the support from NRC. In **Ambato,** UNHCR and HIAS delivered 19 hygiene kits and recommendations on how to improve circular economy to people engaging in recycling across the city. In **Guayaquil,** UNHCR and partners brought together a group of refugees and Ecuadorians to form the Refugee Recycling Association of Isla Trinitaria (RENOVA).

JULIO ANDRADE

Protecting the environment through organic crop production

UNHCR and partners provide tools and techniques to refugees and Ecuadorians across the country, interested in engaging in sustainable and organic crop production. In Julio Andrade, 250 people participated in a fair to exchange crops where refugees and Ecuadorians were able to come together and promote the preservation of the environment.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

A world of possibilities next to you: the new initiative that seeks to promote solidarity and inclusion

UNHCR launched an initiative that seeks to unite all people on a journey towards 'A World of Possibilities' in Ecuador. With the support of Ecuadorian singer-songwriter and actress Nikki Mackliff, UNHCR seeks to explore, hand in hand with people forced to flee and their host communities, how to create a society where coexistence and prosperity is possible for everyone. Learn more of this initiative here.

NATIONAL

MAFU: The book teaching children about forced displacement

UNHCR and Fudela launched the children's book 'The Adventures of MAFU', an awareness-raising tool seeking to provide children and adolescents with information of the different causes of forced displacement, and to teach them about the importance of integrating refugees in host communities. The authors of 'The Adventures of MAFU' are part of Change the World, one of the community processes led by UNHCR and Fudela in the province of Esmeraldas. "The Adventures of MAFU" is available for download for free at the following link.

NATIONAL

Sharing stories to promote understanding and inclusion

Across formats and talents, UNHCR and partners empower the voices of refugees and other displaced people so they can tell their own stories, dreams and worries. In **Lago Agrio,** UNHCR joined the community to paint a mural, combining the stories of refugees and their journey to Ecuador. In **Tulcan,** UNHCR, HIAS and other GTRM partners undertook an 'open house' initiative where refugee families shared their stories of displacement and how they are integrating in Ecuador.

NATIONAL

Sports and music to show and tell

Sports and music have the power to heal, protect and integrate. In L**ago Agrio,** UNHCR and Fudela delivered musical instruments to Casa de la Cultura de Sucumbios so 190 refugee and Ecuadorian children can develop their artistic talents. In **Chical,** UNHCR and Fudela started training the new generation of 64 community champions to develop their skills in arts and sports.

BOLIVAR

Promoting inclusion alongside local authorities

Across Ecuador, UNHCR and partners engage local and national authorities in learning of discrimination and xenophobia, as well as to develop tools to address them among host communities. In Bolivar, UNHCR provided training to 37 municipal staff on inclusion and non-discrimination, where all participants reflected on social identities and diversity as motors of inclusion.

DON'T MISS

NATIONAL

Solidarity initiatives

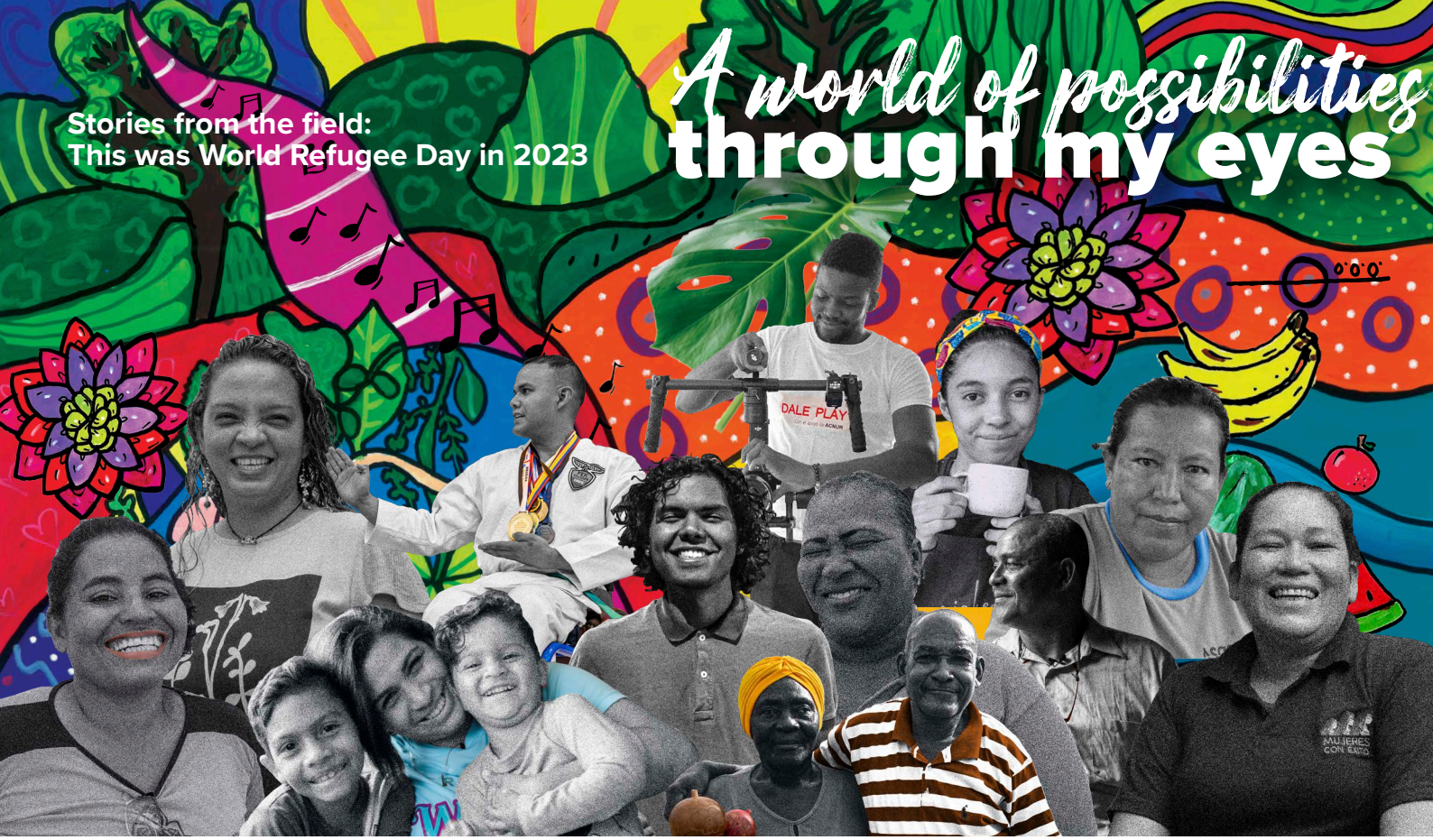
On the Other Side. ***Learn more.***

Somos Inclusión. ***Learn more.***

Interagency campaign HUMANX. ***Learn more.***

Stories from the field:
This was World Refugee Day in 2023

A world of possibilities through my eyes



NATIONAL

For many people, the eyes are the doors of the soul. They show the sorrows, joys, struggles and aspirations that each person keeps in their hearts. Agapito, Ángel, Arlyn, Carlos, Carmen, Daimara, Ismael, Julie, Maura, Omaira, Omar and Scarly are people who were forced to flee their countries. They bring color to the lives of many other people through art, sports, rap, social work, recycling, gastronomy and social networks.

Each and every one of them builds a world of possibilities where differences do not generate exclusion and talents create opportunities. This exhibition was launched in the framework of World Refugee Day with the support of the Ecuadorian artist Carolina Vallejo and the Foreign Ministry of Ecuador. Read their full stories here.

You can help people like them who had to leave their homes and now dream of rebuilding their lives. Donate now.

And in other places in Ecuador...

In Andrade Marin, refugees and Ecuadorians enjoyed a night of integration with Canto por la Paz initiative, in which they were able to enjoy music, art, culture and dance.

In Manta, refugees and Ecuadorians participated in a race for inclusion of people forced to flee to foster solidarity between refugees and their host communities.

In Huaquillas, UNHCR and partners came together to find ways to continue building hope away from home.

In Lago Agrio, UNHCR, Fudela and Radio Sucumbíos held the third Unpublished Music Festival to showcase the talent of refugees and Ecuadorians, fostering solidarity.

In Quito, UNHCR and AUCAS commemorated World Refugee Day during an 'Idolo del Pueblo' football game. With the support of Quicentro, UNHCR handed out postcards and blue ribbons as a sign of solidarity with refugees at the shopping center. In addition, Ali, a refugee in Ecuador, took over Lena Savelli's Twitter, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations, to tell his story and how he contributes to the country that opened the doors for him.

In Ambato, UNHCR and the GTRM team held an event full of art, laughter, food and unity for refugees and the host community.

In San Lorenzo, students and teachers came together to learn about refugees and what gives them hope away from home.

In Guayaquil, UNHCR, our high-profile supporter Niki Mackliff, authorities, and civil society organizations commemorated World Refugee Day through talks and music.

In Portoviejo, refugees and Ecuadorians came together at a fair of entrepreneurship, services and gastronomy in the Eloy Alfaro square, to learn about rights, obligations and opportunities in Ecuador.

In Juan Montalvo, World Refugee Day was commemorated by scoring goals. 120 children and adults in human mobility enjoyed a soccer tournament full of fun and friendship.

We thank the contributions of our donors

15 August 2023

UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who have contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding.

UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the support from private donors.

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