UNHCR Ecuador

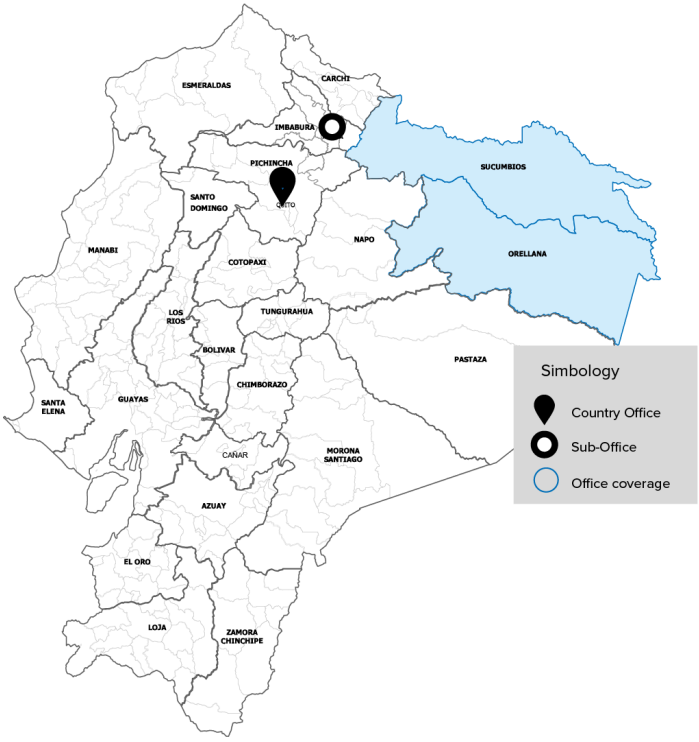
Lago Agrio

October 2023

Operational context

UNHCR opened the Lago Agrio Field Office in 2000, covering Sucumbíos and Orellana Provinces, and bordering Colombia. The area is an economic hub for tourism and oil extraction. Despite the wealth of natural resources and ecological importance of the Amazon basin, there is an absence of government services and socio-economic development. The pandemic exacerbated food insecurity and housing needs, as well as increased barriers to access education and health care. While the area has historically faced security challenges due to the context in neighboring parts of Colombia, in 2022 and 2023, insecurity has significantly increased, bringing a host of new protection risks and operational challenges.

Initially, UNHCR opened the office to respond to the arrivals of Colombians who were forced to flee their country. Currently, the area continues to receive a large flow of Colombian refugees, as well as Venezuelans who had steadily arrived since 2017. Protection risks are increased by entry through irregular paths, the presence of irregular armed groups and organized criminal groups, and environmental risks. UNHCR works closely with local authorities to improving reception conditions for Colombians and Venezuelans, support access to humanitarian assistance, and local integration, as well as support for access to rights and services in the context of a fluid and challenging security environment.



Key figures:

Recognized refugees in Sucumbíos and Orellana Provinces

13,561 Colombians
195 Venezuelans
13 Others

**Historical figure until 30 September 2023*

So far this year (Jan. - Sept. 2023)

177 Colombians
28 Venezuelans
3 Other

Forcibly displaced people registered by HIAS, NRC or UNHCR

7,935 Colombians
12,987 Venezuelans
1,797 Other

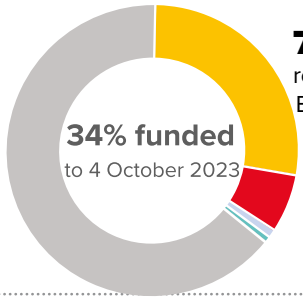
So far this year (Jan. - Sept. 2023)

1,353 Colombians
961 Venezuelans
79 Other

1,128
asylum claims of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing, 13% (153 cases) in Imbabura.
Between January and September 2023

So far in 2023 UNHCR and partners delivered:

1,144 Hygiene kits
859 Cash transfers



76M
required for the operation in Ecuador in 2023

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

UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the critical and generous support provided by donors who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding so far in 2023.

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

UNHCR Ecuador is also grateful for the support from private donors, including Private donors in Australia, Italy, Germany, Japan, Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, the Swedish Postcode Lottery and USA.

Working with partners

UNHCR's Lago Agrio Field Office develops protection programs and durable solutions directly and through its implementing partners in accordance with UNHCR Ecuador's Multi-Year Strategy and Global Protection Priorities, and the Regional Response Platform for the Venezuelan population, which it co-leads with IOM. UNHCR works with five partners: HIAS, Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos, FUDELA, Fundación Tarabita, and NRC. It also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Ombudsman's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Directorate of International Protection and Cantonal Boards for the Protection of Rights.

Key activities

Protection

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities in 2023:

- Advocacy with government entities and the private sector for access to services, local integration and exercise of human rights, prevention of evictions and social inclusion.
- Registration with biometrics, case management/provision of protection information and guidance on access to asylum, migration alternatives, access to services and humanitarian assistance programmes.
- Strengthening the refugee status determination process with authorities.
- Prevention and response to survivors of gender-based violence, and provision of case management services for unaccompanied children and adolescents.
- Capacity-building and technical support for legal advice and representation of refugees and asylum-seekers through the Ombudsman's Office and the Public Defender's Office of Ecuador and the Cantonal Systems for the Protection of Rights (SCPD).
- Support for community-based protection networks with emphasis on development of leadership capacities.

Livelihoods and economic inclusion

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities in 2023:

- Coordination with municipal and provincial authorities and the private sector for livelihood activities with an emphasis on sustainability and resilience to the impact of climate change.
- Awareness-raising events with private actors and host communities for labour recruitment and inclusion.
- Livelihood and socioeconomic inclusion projects with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion targeting people with vulnerabilities from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, with an emphasis on youth.
- Coordination with academic institutions in technical vocational training and entrepreneurship innovation processes, with emphasis on the green and circular economy, gastronomy, tourism, and agricultural sectors.
- Livelihood activities are closely linked to peaceful co-existence, recognizing that Venezuelans, Colombians, and Ecuadorians working together fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Durable Solutions

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities in 2023:

- Fight against xenophobia and discrimination, together with civil society organizations and public institutions, through information campaigns to promote solidarity and coexistence.
- Improving both access to education and integration, and supporting the initiatives of the Ministry of Education, through the "Respiramos Inclusión" methodology.

Coordination

UNHCR and partners conducted the following activities in 2023:

- Co-leader with IOM of the Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM).
- Support to the Human Mobility Roundtable of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility. Binational coordination with counterparts of the United Nations system (Ecuador-Colombia).

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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