UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Ecuador

Operational Update

N.5 | October 2023

Rocío is part of Youth Building the Future, a community group weaving a future full of hope in San Lorenzo
Photo: UNHCR/Camila Tunjano

Figures at a glance

Population figures

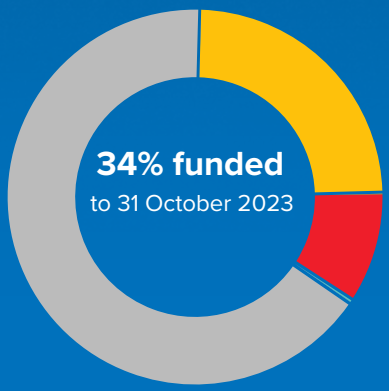
75,803
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

95% from neighbouring Colombia

62,569
refugees with active cases registered in ProGres[1]

Our 2023 response in figures

152,259
refugees and other displaced people supported as of the end of October 2023



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

52,061
people received legal guidance & assistance

19,797
people assisted with cash for basic needs & protection

11,834
people supported with collective emergency shelter

525
people provided with technical or skills certification

670
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

15,584
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

31,042
people received hygiene kits

2,662
GBV survivors supported

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

Operational context

The regularization process continues in Ecuador, with people continuing to apply for their visa despite several technical issues in the online procedures. UNHCR, partners and other UN agencies and programmes continue to support the process (see page 3 for more details).

The United States announced the implementation of Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs) in Ecuador to process applications for regular entry to the country for people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Colombia, who have been in Ecuador on or before 18 October. The SMOs operated in two phases, with the second one starting on 20 November for people from eligible countries to apply directly at www.movilidadsegura.org. Moreover, the US government also announced the implementation of a family reunification process for certain Ecuadorian nationals, which would facilitate a temporary visa and then the possibility of applying for permanent residency in that country. This process will allow North American citizens and residents of Ecuadorian origin to request entry on behalf of direct family members.

After the second round of Elections held on 15 October, 35-year-old Daniel Noboa was elected President for the next 15 months. Noboa assumed office on 23 November 2023. Noboa receives a country facing complex mixed movements to, through and from Ecuador.

The Oceanographic and Antarctic Institute of the Ecuadorian Navy (INOCAR) announced that the El Niño phenomenon was imminent in Ecuador by mid-November, with intense rainfall and a rise in sea levels anticipated between December and February. These months are expected to witness heavy floods, landslides, and other natural disasters in areas situated at or below 1,500 meters above sea level. This includes 17 provinces, 143 cantons and 489 parishes, primarily along the Ecuadorian coast – areas with high numbers of refugees. UNHCR and its partners have been actively supporting the development humanitarian response strategies through the Humanitarian Country Team, in line with the national response plan.

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 fourth 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 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. 27,865 people entered Ecuador in October 2023, with a daily entry average of 929 Venezuelans. This represents a 29% 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

4,527 Colombians were registered in need of international protection so far in 2023, 470 in October, 72% of whom were families with children. This accounts for a 4% decrease as compared to the same period in 2022.

4,527 Colombians were registered in need of international protection in 2023[2]

- **470** were registered in October

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 the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish). The GTRM is assessing a new methodology with the Government to estimate the new stock figure.
3 Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info
4 2022 Protection Monitoring available at our data portal

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

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 socioeconomic 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.

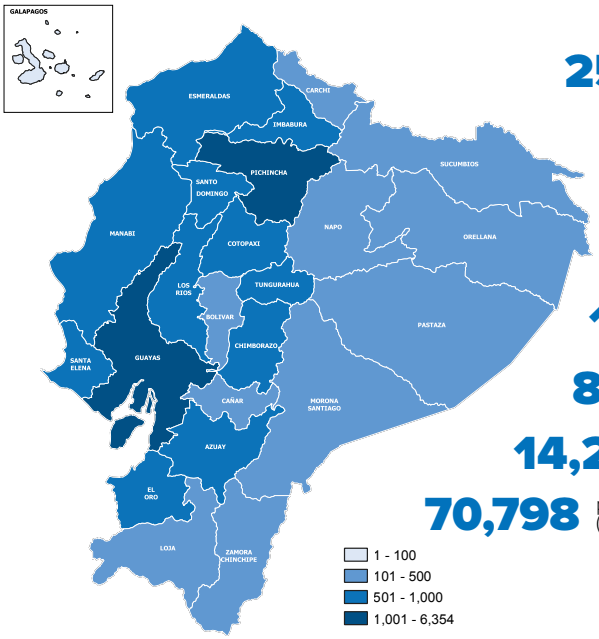
The first phase of registration started registering and regularizing all Venezuelans who entered regularly prior to the issuance of the Decree with a VIRTE visa. Registration is also divided in phases: first, Venezuelans who entered regularly beginning on 1 September 2022; second, people of all nationalities as of 16 November 2022; and third, all Venezuelans who entered irregularly beginning on 17 February 2023. The registration phase will end on 15 August.

Regularization of Venezuelans who entered regularly began on 1 October, while the process for other foreigners began on 12 July. By 17 November 2023, 122,880 visa applications had been lodged, 85,076 visas had been granted and 70,078 ID cards had been delivered.

Registration ended on 15 August, with 248,416 people having appointments for their biometric registration and over 201,700 people who have a stay permit, by 17 November.

Province of residence per VIRTE visa applicant

Source MDI



259,084 people registered through the official website (source: MDI)

248,416 people with appointments for biometric registration (source: MDI)

201,708 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

122,880 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

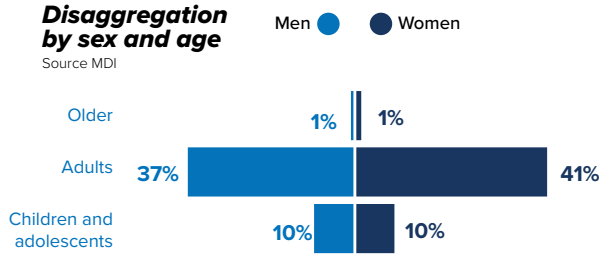
85,076 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

14,284 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

70,798 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

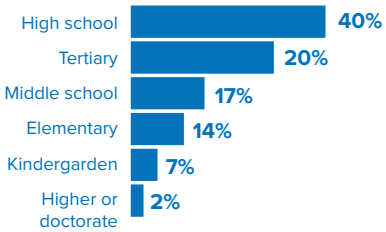
Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

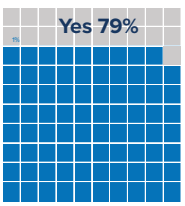
Source MDI

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 17 November 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, 87,417 people have been supported in the process.

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

Refugees access brigades to ensure the protection of their rights

560 refugees and others in human mobility benefited from documentation, visa renewal and admissibility interview brigades in **Machala,** conducted with the support of the International Protection Directorate in Machala. In addition, along with other GTRM organization, UNHCR provided specialized attention in registration and inter-institutional care for people in human mobility, especially newly arrived women, children and families in Ibarra. In other locations like **Montúfar,** 30 people accessed legal advice, asylum applications and visas to facilitate processes and access to services in the country.

NATIONAL

Trainings and workshops enable the protection of refugees and host communities

In **Carchi and Ibarra,** UNHCR and partners conducted workshops to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment for Municipal Control Agents and staff from various places that assist refugees on a daily basis. Additionally, in **Playa Alta,** 24 people were trained in sexual and reproductive health, contraceptive methods, and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. To promote inclusive spaces, three workshops on Human Rights Fundamentals and International Protection were delivered to teachers, students, and social workers in **Esmeraldas** to encourage the learning of tools to identify discriminatory practices and raise awareness of these issues in educational settings to implement peaceful coexistence plans.

IBARRA

Basic first aid saves lives in communities

With the support of Aldeas SOS, the Red Cross and IOM, UNHCR delivered trainings on first aid and sexual and reproductive health for 17 young people in human mobility. These skills are essential in the daily life of communities, promote interest and encourage the availability of community health promoters in the spaces where they are most needed. The well-being of everyone is essential to create sustainable communities where awareness to achieve quality health is possible.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

NATIONAL

Education is the path to a better future for children

UNHCR and partners organized the event “Me Incluyo, Me educo” (I include myself, I educate myself) in Bolívar and Tulcán to raise awareness about the importance of education, especially for refugee and Ecuadorian girls. The event was attended by 270 parents, mothers, caregivers, girls, boys and adolescents, including refugees and migrants and people from their host community. The event helped to raise awareness of the importance of education for all children, regardless of their background or origins. It also provided the participants with valuable tools that they can use to advocate for their own rights and the rights of others.

IBARRA

Assistance for refugee and migrant families help guarantee access to education

With the support of the Education Cannot Wait Fund, UNHCR in Ibarra delivered assistance to families with children, girls, and adolescents outside the education system and at risk of dropout. With this assistance, 36 refugee and migrant families were supported to guarantee access to school for children, girls, and adolescents.

IMBABURA

UNHCR and Kimirina strengthen the capacities of healthcare professionals from a human rights perspective

UNHCR and Kimirina partnered to strengthen the capacity of healthcare professionals from the Ministry of Public Health on issues related to HIV and vulnerable populations.

Through the “Respiramos Inclusión” (Breathing Inclusion) methodology, training workshops were held at Health Centers in Ibarra and Otavalo. These workshops enabled 28 professionals to gain a deeper understanding of social identities and power dynamics, confront prejudices and stereotypes, and identify discriminatory practices at both the interpersonal and systemic levels, particularly in the care of people engaged in sex work, refugees and migrants.

This initiative has equipped these professionals with the ability to recognize social inequality in various aspects of healthcare and, ultimately, to work towards fostering inclusion and non-discrimination within the healthcare sector.

PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

NATIONAL

67 enterprises in Ecuador were recognized with the Inclusive Company Seal

UNHCR, the UN Global Compact Ecuador Network and Programa Sin Fronteras recognized 67 companies from the private sector and chambers of commerce for their inclusion policies toward refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Employability, supply chains, inclusive business environments, training and capacity building were the categories in which the companies were recognized.

“People forced to flee arrive in their host countries with the knowledge and skills to promote the development,” said Federico Agusti, UNHCR representative in Ecuador. “The fact that companies recognize these qualities in people forced to flee is not only a major step towards their socioeconomic integration, but it is also better business and contributes to creating a world of possibilities. A world that includes us all.” The award ceremony also included the presence of the members of the initiative’s evaluation committee and representatives of the 67 recognized companies. Learn more here.

CHICAL

Strengthening financial education promotes the socioeconomic inclusion of refugees

Twelve refugees, forcibly displaced people, and members of the host community in Chical, northern border of Ecuador, participated in a financial education workshop in which they learned to create budgets, as well as different savings techniques. With this type of workshop, both practical and theoretical, held across the country, people strengthen their skills that allow them to manage their resources efficiently and thus meet their basic needs.

LATACUNGA

UNHCR promotes the employability of refugees in Latacunga

UNHCR, with the support of the Ministry of Labour and HIAS, delivered workshops in Latacunga, Cotopaxi province, called the 'Employability Route'. In these workshops, 22 refugees and forcibly displaced people learned different techniques to improve their soft skills and tools to give a good job-interview, which will increase their chances of getting a formal job. Likewise, the attendees uploaded their resumes to the Multitrabajos job vacancies platform and learned how to navigate the website to apply for available posts.

CLIMATE ACTION

ESMERALDAS

Working with communities to mitigate risks of El Niño phenomenon

In Esmeraldas, UNHCR, in collaboration with the local GTRM and the National Risk Management Service, carried out risk coordination and prevention workshops within the framework of the El Niño phenomenon, aimed at 32 municipal officials from the province of Esmeraldas and humanitarian workers. These workshops focused on the prevention of gender violence and protection of children in emergency contexts and activation of the Technical Roundtable 4 of Humanitarian Assistance and Temporary Shelter.

IBARRA

In Priorato recycling is done in community

In Quito, UNHCR made improvements to the infrastructure of La Casa del Hermano Shelter from Patronato San José. UNHCR also delivered portable sinks and differentiated trash bins to promote a recycling culture. UNHCR is also promoting environmental education at safe spaces that are intended for refugees and their host communities. These spaces include the community gardens at Museos de la Ciudad, a space intervened by UNHCR and partners. Through puppets and marionettes, the gardens explain the importance of this activity for the community.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

IBARRA

Creating inclusive spaces strengthens the sustainable development of communities

On World Mental Health Day in San Lorenzo, UNHCR and partners held the event "Mindful Awareness, Self-Care, and the Protection of the Mangrove" where 33 women had the opportunity to participate and share their experiences after being forced to flee their home countries. These safe spaces provided them with confidence to talk about all the changes they have undergone with their families in their new home. In Ibarra, Ecuador, in collaboration with Consejo Parroquial Priorato, UNHCR carried out monthly community cinema brigades where children, girls, and adolescents created an environment of peaceful coexistence and inclusion.

TULCÁN

The importance of quality mental health for refugees

In Tulcán, young people in human mobility and from the host communities participated in a workshop focused on emotional recognition, the promotion of mental health and suicide prevention through recreational activities and games. These activities allow people to identify difficult moments in their lives and develop skills to face and address them appropriately for their personal well-being and that of the communities.

NATIONAL

UNHCR and journalists launch manual to communicate about human mobility in the Americas

At a time when the Americas face several overlapping displacement situations, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, associations of Venezuelan journalists in Antioquia (Colombia), Ecuador and Peru, local journalists, in coordination with the Universidad San Francisco of Quito (USFQ), published the Manual for Communicating about Human Mobility. This guide written by and for communicators contains practical recommendations for covering forced displacement with a human rights approach. This resource was produced collaboratively by 20 journalists – both displaced and from host communities – through mentoring led by UNHCR and USFQ, with technical support from the Associations. Learn more here.

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

Youth Building the Future is weaving a future full of hope in San Lorenzo

The youth group is leading community engagement in San Lorenzo.
Photo: UNHCR/Camila Tunjano

SAN LORENZO

On the streets of San Lorenzo, a border town between Ecuador and Colombia, a group of passionate young community leaders has emerged, united by a shared vision: to build a future brimming with opportunities for children and adolescents in their vibrant community.

"We are all equal, I don't see the difference," said Rocio Yupa, a 26-year-old Ecuadorian who coordinates the network. "The idea is for youth from other countries to share, open up, and feel part of this space. By contributing to strengthening the youth of San Lorenzo, they also become part of it and empower themselves in each of the spaces we have open and available for them," she added.

"Jóvenes Construyendo Futuro" (Youth Building a Future) was born three years ago as an inter-neighbourhood support network, determined to address local challenges and foster a thriving environment for the next generation. Today, they are a consolidated network of 25 young Ecuadorians, Colombians, and Venezuelans between the ages of 18 and 28, working to promote spaces of integration and education in their communities.

"Since we arrived, I have felt welcomed, as if I were one more Ecuadorian," said Juan Carlos Castro, a young man who was forced to flee violence in Colombia with his family back in 2005. "They have not made me feel different, nor have I experienced indifference. It's like being back there at home, but happier and more cheerful," he assures.

The work of these young individuals focuses on promoting the safe use of free time in their communities. Each month, they host community events that blend art and recreational activities for children, alongside insightful training workshops and entertaining fairs featuring sports arenas and film forums for teenagers. The group also launched KLK, a new podcast initiative where they discuss issues affecting youth in the communities.

"Youth Building the Future" is an example of how young men and women can be agents of positive change in their communities. This network is transforming the lives of children and adolescents in San Lorenzo and forging a path towards a future protected from violence and full of opportunities.

You can help strengthen the work done by community groups like Youth Building a Future. Donate now.

We thank the contributions of our donors

31 October 2023

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