UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Ecuador

Operational Update

N.6 | May - June 2024

Ida crocheting, a craft that reminds her of Venezuela and helps her earn a living in Ecuador. Thanks the regularization, Ida can now have a formal business in her host country. Photo: UNHCR/Coralía Proaño

Figures at a glance

Population figures

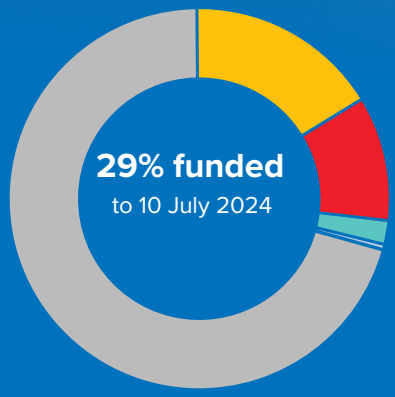
77,250

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

95% from neighbouring Colombia

64,033

refugees with active cases registered in ProGres[1]



73.3M
required in 2024

- 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 2024 response in figures

75,767*

refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGres as of the end of June 2024

**Figure includes people support through other services beyond those described below*

30,058
people received legal guidance & assistance

8,729
people assisted with cash for basic needs and protection

15,151
people supported with collective emergency shelter

5,606
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

1,115
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

1,730
GBV survivors supported

130
people provided with technical or skills certification

5,437
people received hygiene kits

117
people supported with child protection services

5,073
people supported with community - based protection services

1 Historical figure registered by the government to the end of April 2024. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGres. Figures to the end of June 2024.

Operational context

Ecuador continues to be at the centre of ongoing population movements and forced displacements of multiple nationalities. The number of people from Colombia seeking asylum in Ecuador continues to increase, with over 1,000 registered in in May and June this year. The number of Colombians seeking asylum in Ecuador so far in 2024 (3,925) is now three quarters of the total registered in the entire 2023, according to Government figures. Venezuelans continued to rank first in arrivals in the country, with over 42,000 who entered Ecuador during the reporting period. According to Government figures, the first semester of 2024 has seen asylum claims increase considerably (8,434), registering 78% of the total asylum claims registered in the entire 2023, which continues to make Ecuador an important country of asylum.

Although there has not been an official announcement of the extension of the regularization process for refugees and migrants, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility has made statements about it becoming a reality for people who successfully completed the registration process will be able to access this extension. UNHCR and IOM are working together with the National Government to implement the extension of the regularization process, as well as a communication campaign to disseminate it among the population.

The wave of violence continues in Ecuador. Between April and June, President Noboa has issued three state of exception decrees, two of them declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. For the last state of exception, the government sent a document with more than 50 pages of substantiation, where data such as the 700% increase in violent deaths in the country, that 4.5% of the surveyed adolescents know people who have been recruited by criminal gangs, and that 60% of these armed groups have children and adolescents among their members were included. According to data gathered by UNHCR in Ecuador until 10 July, refugees and other displaced people have reported 715 security incidents which have affected 670 people, mainly related to gender-based violence, insecurity and criminal violence, torture and exploitation. In addition, 285 refugees and migrants have reported to UNHCR they were displaced to other locations because of violence. UNHCR and partners continue to adapt their response to support to refugees and other displaced people with assistance and orientation.

Moreover, Ecuadorians continue to feature among the top nationalities to be crossing the Darien, with just over 12,000 people (second nationality after Venezuelans) by end of May 2024, according to Panamanian authorities. However, the largest numbers of people fleeing Ecuador are being registered through El Salvador, where over 43,000 people had entered by the end of April 2024.

The Safe Mobility initiative continues to be implemented in the country, providing eligible refugees and migrants with safe and regular pathways to the U.S. See more here.

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

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 42,591 people entered Ecuador in between May and June 2024, with a daily entry average of 710 Venezuelans, compared to exit figures registering 38,950 and 649 daily exits on average. This represents a 9.3 % decrease in entries and a 16.5 % decrease in exits as compared to the same period in 2023. While exits continue to be significant, there is a downward trend during the first six months of the year (different to the trend overserved during the same period in 2023, while entries have remained somewhat stable as compared to 2023.

444,778 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

According to Government data, 3,925 Colombians haves sought asylum so far in 2024, 1,051 between May and June, a 2.7% decrease as compared to the same period in 2023. The number registered in 2024 accounts for 74% of the number registered in the entire 2023, and a 60% increase as compared to the same period in 2023 (January to July).

3,925 Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2024[2]

1,051 were registered between May and June

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

77% access to food, housing, clothing[4]

10% access to rights and services (job, education)[4]

7% access to documentation[4]

Ecuadorians

The number of Ecuadorians on the run has increased in the past years, with over 86.000 having crossed the Darien jungle in 2022 and 2023 combined, being the second nationality to have crossed the Darien in those two years. By end of May 2024, Ecuadorians continued to be second nationality to be crossing this route, with over 12,000 people. Over 61,000 Ecuadorians had arrived irregularly to Mexico. By the end of April, over 43,000 Ecuadorians had traveled to El Salvador, 4,000 of whom returned home. Moreover, 66,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims by end of 2023.

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. Figures of asylum claims from the Government.
3 Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info
4 2023 Protection Monitoring Report available at https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ecu

SPECIAL FOCUS: REGULARIZATION PROCESS

The broad Registration and Regularization exercise has been key in enabling refugees and migrants to meet their needs and to advance solutions as part of a broader protection and socioeconomic integration strategy.

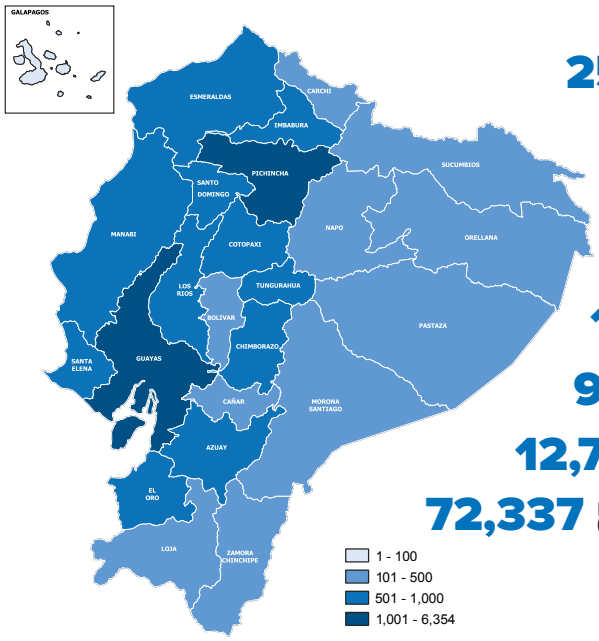
As provided by Decree 436/22, the first phase of the Registration and Regularization initiative started in 2022, with the registration of foreigners living in Ecuador with an irregular status, together with the opportunity for them to obtain a temporary stay permit (Certificado de Permanencia Migratoria) 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 ended on 15 August.

By the end of April, when the process officially ended, 140,277 visa applications had been lodged, 95,809 visas had been granted and 72,337 ID cards had been delivered, while over 199,930 people had a stay permit. Following the announcements of the Ecuadorian Government in the framework of the Los Angeles Declaration this year, UNHCR is engaging with authorities to assess the possibilities of an extension to the regularization process.

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)

199,930 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

140,277 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

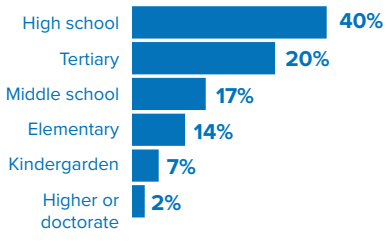
95,809 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

12,768 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

72,337 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)

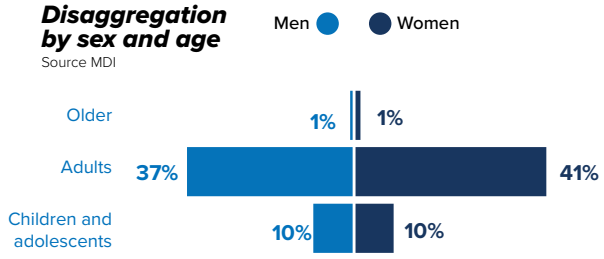
Last education level achieved

Source MDI



Disaggregation by sex and age

Source MDI



Support staff financed by UNHCR and IOM for the regularization process

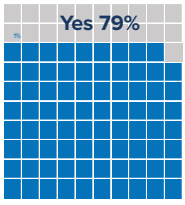
Source MDI

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 13 May 2024.

HIGHLIGHT: WORLD REFUGEE DAY

In commemoration of World Refugee Day, which falls on 20 June each year, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, along with several partner organizations, local authorities and other stakeholders organized a variety of cultural, sports, musical, and gastronomic events throughout Ecuador. These events took place in Quito, Tulcán, Huaquillas, Lago Agrio, Cuenca, Manta, Guayaquil, Ibarra, and Esmeraldas to promote protection, inclusion, solidarity, and support for people forced to flee while highlighting their valuable contributions to Ecuadorian society.

In **Quito,** the "Estéreo Arepa" festival at the Aucas Sports Stadium brought together hundreds of refugees and members of the host community, who enjoyed live music, football, rugby, and kickball matches, as well as a food fair and information booths. The night ended with a message of solidarity from Nikki Mackliff and her song "Un Mundo Posible".

In **Tulcán,** the first edition of the "Un Mundo Posible" (A world of possibilities) cycling tour attracted around 250 participants who cycled through the city, spreading messages of empathy and inclusion. The day also featured the "RefugiArte" art exhibition and recreational activities for children.

In **Huaquillas,** a sports, cultural, and artistic gathering brought together refugees and locals to enjoy artistic performances, an exciting boxing match, and a sports night where Huaquillas Football Club players participated in a match to demonstrate their support for the integration of people on the run.

In **Lago Agrio,** the "Abrazando Fronteras" (Embracing Borders) festival filled Lago Agrio with flavour and rhythm. More than 120 people from Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador enjoyed traditional dishes, participated in sports competitions, and participated in an art exhibition and artistic performances. Young people from UNHCR's music workshop shared their original compositions, promoting peaceful coexistence and the prevention of drug use.

Cuenca held the "Festival por un Mundo Posible" (Festival for a World of Possibilities), which was attended by local authorities and representatives of various institutions. Cultural and recreational activities were developed to promote the integration and support of refugees.

Manta took to the streets in solidarity. The "Un Mundo Posible" 4K race brought together more than 200 people, who expressed their support and recognition of the contributions of those who have fled their countries and are rebuilding their lives in this city.

In **Guayaquil,** UNHCR held the "Estéreo Arepa" festival at the bus terminal. Refugees and locals enjoyed an entrepreneurship fair, live music, information, and legal advice. They also participated in a live cooking class with Alberta Vallarino, a former MasterChef contestant, and Venezuelan chef Diana Romero, who prepared Colombian arepas with an Ecuadorian and Venezuelan twist. In addition, UNHCR partnered with the Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Guayaquil to organize the second edition of the "Ponte en mi lugar, corre por los Refugiados" 5K race. Hundreds of people ran through Samanes Park in support and solidarity with those who have been forced to flee their homes.

Ibarra enjoyed art and culture at the "Somos Semilla" (We Are the Seed) festival. 110 refugees and members of the host community enjoyed artistic performances by Colombian and Ecuadorian groups. A choral singing evening was also held at the "El Cuartel" Cultural Center, which was illuminated in blue in solidarity with refugees.

In **San Lorenzo,** cultural activities focused on the oral tradition shared between Ecuador and Colombia. A student performance on the reception of refugees was held, in which participants shared their own experiences. Local artists delighted the audience with presentations that included traditional instruments such as the marimba, the bombo, and the cununo. In addition, the "Jóvenes Construyendo Futuro" (Young People Building the Future) group presented a staging led by Juan Carlos, a young Colombian refugee, representing his own story and experience.

Ecuador lights up in blue in solidarity #WithRefugees

In a gesture of unity and support, emblematic monuments, bridges, buildings, and even the entrance to the capital's metro, in several cities in Ecuador lit up in blue in commemoration of World Refugee Day. Quito, Cuenca, Loja, Muisne, Esmeraldas, Tulcán, Ibarra, Manta, Lago Agrio, and Huaquillas were some of the locations that joined this initiative, lighting up their most representative symbols as a beacon of hope for refugees.

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

UNHCR stands with LGBTIQ+ people, including those forced to flee

Across the country, UNHCR joined Pride celebrations to draw attention to the need for support for LGBTIQ+ people, particularly those forced to flee to save their lives. In **Lago Agrio,** UNHCR took part in the LGBTIQ+ Pride march where dozens of people joined to celebrate diversity and embrace differences. UNHCR will continue to advocate against all forms of discrimination and in favour of fundamental human rights. In **Guayaquil,** UNHCR took part in the pride march, in collaboration with Mujer y Mujer, advocating for a world where LGBTIQ+ refugees can develop their potential and contribute their talents to the communities that host them. In **Ibarra,** UNHCR joined the LGBTIQ+ Pride Day march with various organizations, united by respect, solidarity, and inclusion. In **Tulcán,** UNHCR participated in the LGBTIQ+ Pride March, which ended in Central Park, and participated in the vigil for the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community. No one should live in fear for being who they are or loving who they love. In **Quito,** LGBTIQ+ refugees showcased their potential and determination to positively contribute to their host communities. UNHCR participated in celebrating diversity at the Pride, joining the United Nations block to ensure the message is clear: no one, wherever they come from, whomever they love, should be forced to flee.

CARCHI

Access to documentation is a human right

In Carchi, UNHCR and FUDELA held a registration and document renewal day for the Awa indigenous population, where both refugees and members of the host community updated and renewed their documents. In this part of the country, refugees have had access to various basic services such as education, health and specific protection needs for people fleeing their homes.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

PICHINCHA

Timely and accurate information saves lives

UNHCR and the Public Defender's Office undertook the sixth "Ruta de los Derechos" (Route of Rights) initiative in the province of Pichincha. This project aims to ensure that refugees and others in human mobility have easy access to information about legal services. Three mobile units will travel to seven provinces, 31 cantons, and 50 neighbourhoods across the country. Individuals will be able to consult on various topics, including family law, child and adolescent rights, labor rights, gender-based violence survivors rights, and tenant rights. The project seeks to guarantee access to justice through timely and quality technical defense.

QUITO

Developing inclusive educational spaces for children

Respiramos Inclusión methodology is committed to promoting safe and violence-free educational environments. 126 Ecuadorian educational institutions have opened their doors to inclusion, and more than 2,600 officials, including teachers and school authorities, have actively participated in this transformation process.

PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

MANTA

Refugees and locals participate in business conference to promote development

In the framework of the Purchase with Purpose initiative, UNHCR held a business conference to promote the commercialization of products made by 20 refugee and Ecuadorian entrepreneurs in local stores across the Province of Manabí. Through their skills and talents, displaced people can contribute to boost the economy of their host communities.

TULCÁN

With business classes, people in human mobility improve their income

In Tulcán, with the support of Aldeas SOS Ecuador, UNHCR delivered an entrepreneurship learning programme for adolescents of the Assisted Housing initiative. In this cycle, people in human mobility and Ecuadorians learned about how to price their products and services to make a profit. In addition, they received advice that will allow them to make their businesses sustainable.

CLIMATE ACTION

IBARRA

Formal registration and training for RECIPRI Recycling Asso

UNHCR, in collaboration with the National Institute of Popular and Solidarity Economy (IEPS), held a workshop to formally register the RECIPRI recycling association. This group of Venezuelans and Colombians is dedicated to environmental protection. UNHCR also provided training for 12 members of RECIPRI, equipping them with skills for peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, and teamwork. These efforts highlight UNHCR's commitment to sustainability and the integration of displaced communities.

CUENCA

Business model workshop on circular economy concludes in

UNHCR concluded the Business Model workshop with a focus on Circular Economy. This approach promotes the efficient use of resources, waste reduction, and the reuse of materials, thereby contributing to environmental sustainability. 26 participants received their certificates, and some of them will receive additional funding for their businesses thanks to their innovative circular business proposals.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

ESMERALDAS

Refugees and Ecuadorians build together A World of Possibilities

To commemorate the National Day of Memory and Solidarity with the Victims of the Armed Conflict in Colombia, UNHCR and its partners in Esmeraldas participated in a collective loom, while promoting messages of reconciliation, truth, peace, and social transformation. The loom is a display of solidarity from the communities with those who have been forced to flee their homes.

LAGO AGRIO

Women promote their rights through color and knowledge

UNHCR supported 15 refugee women, asylum seekers, and Ecuadorians to jointly built the purple map, a display of female empowerment and resilience. In addition, this group of strong women received training on protection and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

Ida crocheting, a craft that reminds her of Venezuela and helps her earn a living in Ecuador. Photo: UNHCR/Coralía Proaño

Regular status helps Venezuelan entrepreneur weave dreams and hopes for the future in Ecuador

QUITO

Ida Sandrea always has a smile on her face when she has a thread and needle in her hands. From a young age, the 54-year-old Venezuelan discovered a deep passion for crochet, a craft she has mastered to dress beauty queens back in Maracaibo – a memory seared in her mind as she crochets in her new home in Ecuador. Though far from her land, Quito has given her a new beginning and the regularization process implemented by the Government, the peace of mind she sought for.

"It is essential to be regularized. Owning a business, I need to charge customers with my own bills. Now I have my identity card and a bank account, I feel safer," Ida pointed out.

In 2022, the Ecuadorian Government launched a second regularization process to help thousands of people who had lost their regular status or arrived irregularly until June that year.

Ida was determined to do all she could to obtain a regular status. "Lack of knowledge and my role as a community leader led me to learn about regularization" she said. She sought information and orientation in several organizations and social media, until she was able to secure her passport. Ida also helped others in need, referring them to where they could receive support to begin their process and ensuring everyone understood the importance of regularizing their status in the country.

Thanks to the financial contributions from donors like the Government of Canada, and the support from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and partners, people like Ida, her daughter and over 72,000 more were able to obtain an ID through the regularization process before the end of the exercise in April 2024. With an information campaign, technical assistance within State institutions and direct support to applicants through mobile brigades, nearly 200,000 people obtained a certificate of permanence and just over 95,800 secured a VIRTE visa by end of April 2024.

Ida's dreams have begun to materialize now that she has a regular status. Her goal is to transform her craft into a recognized business, showcasing her designs and artisanal expertise. Read the full story here.

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

10 July 2024

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, inculding those in Australia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain.

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