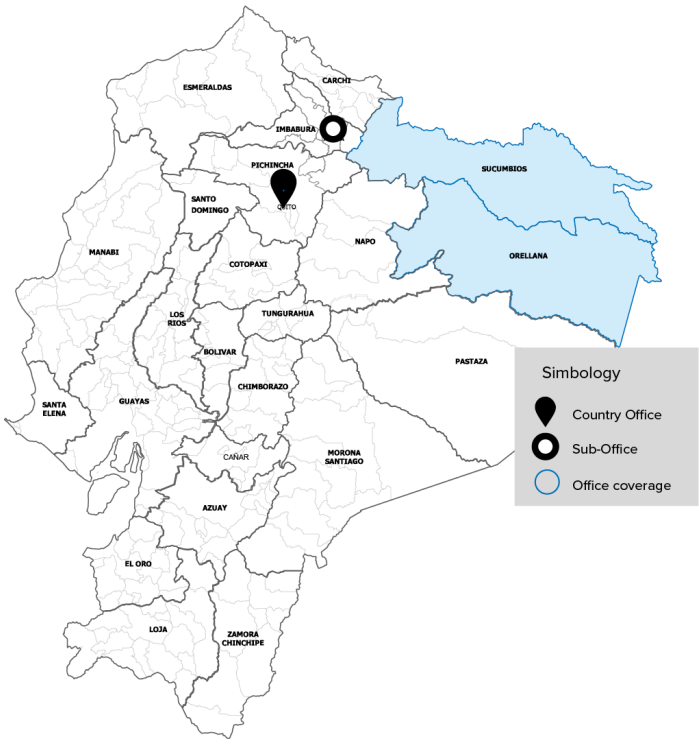
UNHCR Ecuador
Lago Agrio
January 2024

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 neighbouring 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 haved 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 improve reception conditions for Colombians and Venezuelans, support access to humanitarian assistance, and local integration within host communities, 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

11,818 Colombians
157 Venezuelans
9 Others
**Historical figure until 31 January 2024*

Between January 2023 and 2024

297 Colombians
32 Venezuelans
3 Other

Forcibly displaced people registered by HIAS, NRC or UNHCR

7,200 Colombians
9,469 Venezuelans
1,530 Other

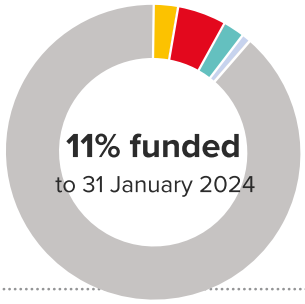
Between January 2023 and 2024

1,732 Colombians
928 Venezuelans
130 Other

1,559
asylum claims of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing, 13% (201 cases) in Sucumbíos & Orellana.
Between January 2023 and 2024

Between January 2023 and 2024 UNHCR and partners delivered:

1,778 Hygiene kits
859 Cash transfers



73.3M
required for the operation in Ecuador in 2024

- 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 private and public donors who contributed with earmarked and unearmarked funding so far in 2024.

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

Working with partners

UNHCR's Lago Agrio Field Office implements protection and durable solutions programmes directly and through its implementing partners in accordance with UNHCR Ecuador's Multi-Year Strategy and Global Protection Priorities. UNHCR works with four partners: HIAS, Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos, Fundación Tarabita, and NRC. It also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Public Defender's Office and the Directorate of International Protection. UNHCR coordinates with 22 organizations within the framework of the inter-agency response platform for refugees and migrants (GTRM), which it co-leads with IOM. During 2023, nearly 72,000 refugees and migrants received humanitarian assistance in Sucumbios and Orellana by GTRM.

Key activities

Protection

UNHCR and partners condyuct the following activities in 2024:

- 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.
- Train public officials on international protection, prevention of gender-based violence, child protection, and forced displacement of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Provide technical support on international protection standards and in the design of local routes and public policy for the protection of people in human mobility to strategic actors at the local level.
- Work with civil society organizations, community leaders and municipalities to boost community networks, foster integration and promote peaceful coexistence.
- Improve infrastructure of community centres to promote integration among refugees and locals.
- Provide technical assistance to refugee organizations to promote their participation in the discussion, decision making and development of public policies.
- With support from UNAIDS, train healthcare professionals in the HIV/AIDS response to deliver inclusive health services following the principle of non-discrimination.

Livelihoods and economic inclusion

UNHCR and partners conduct the following activities in 2024:

- 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.
- Coordination with municipal and provincial authorities for the economic inclusion of refugees in the formalization of businesses, entrepreneurship fairs and economic activities.
- 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.
- Coordinate with the public sector for the inclusion of refugees in their programmes, including with the national tax agency for the formalization of microbusiness.
- Advocate for the economic inclusion of unaccompanied children and people with disabilities through entrepreneurship schools.
- Develop livelihoods initiatives to prevent the recruitment of young adults and children into criminal groups.
- Foster relationships with financial institutions to help refugees open bank accounts and apply for loans.
- Implement a digital literacy programme to strengthen the use of technology for livelihoods by refugees.
- Coordinate with academic institutions to deliver technical vocational training.
- Promote livelihoods initiatives tailored to the local context, including agricultural, textile circular economy and gastronomy projects.

Durable Solutions

UNHCR and partners conduct the following activities in 2024:

- 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 conduct the following activities in 2024:

- 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).

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