

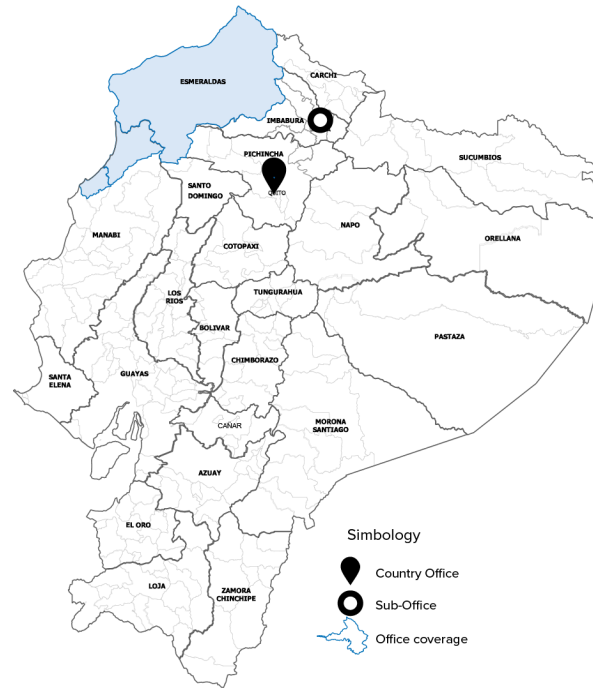


**UNHCR Ecuador**  
**Esmeraldas**  
**October 2023**

## Operational context

UNHCR opened the Esmeraldas Field Office in 2008, covering Esmeraldas Province and two cantons in Manabí, Pedernales and Jama. Bordering Nariño Department in Colombia, and hosting a key deep-water port and oil refinery, Esmeraldas is an economic hub for exports of shrimp, bananas, and oil. Despite the importance to the national economy, almost 40% of the population live in poverty, and public infrastructure and services are limited. The pandemic exacerbated food insecurity and housing needs, as well as increased barriers to access education and health care. The province is also extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change and natural disasters including earthquakes, floods, and has the highest rates of dengue and chikungunya in the country. Since 2022, insecurity has increased significantly, bringing a host of new protection risks and operational challenges.

Esmeraldas is a diverse province, with 43% of the population identifying as Afro-Ecuadorian, and large communities of Awa, Chachi, and Epera indigenous groups. The rich diversity and the geographic location bordering Colombia, has made Esmeraldas attractive for local integration of Colombian refugees, and recently Venezuelans. While Colombians fleeing from Nariño, Valle de Cauca, and Cauca, have networks in Esmeraldas, Venezuelans are drawn to the province for its culture, climate and economic opportunities. UNHCR continues to work on improving reception conditions, access to humanitarian assistance, local integration, as well as strengthening community networks and the capabilities of local authorities, and developing initiatives to mitigate climate change risks, amid a fluid and challenging security environment.



## Key figures:

### Recognized refugees in Esmeraldas Province

**8,814** Colombians  
**87** Venezuelans  
**9** Others

*\*Historical figure until 30 September 2023*

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

**299** Colombians  
**21** Venezuelans

### Forcibly displaced people registered by HIAS, NRC or UNHCR

**9,097** Colombians  
**11,333** Venezuelans  
**1,377** Other

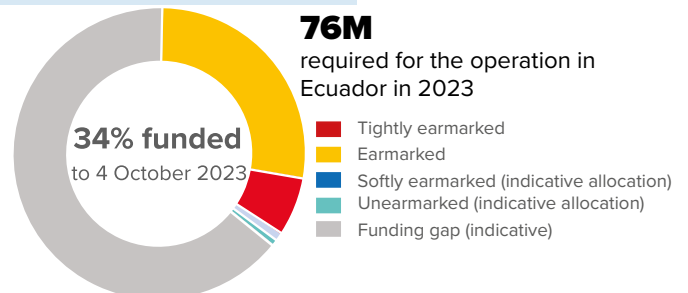
So far this year (Jan. - Sept. 2023)

**509** Colombians  
**452** Venezuelans  
**70** Other

**1,128** asylum claims of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing, 11% (123 cases) in Esmeraldas.  
*Between January and September 2023*

### So far in 2023 UNHCR and partners delivered:

**533** Hygiene kits  
**1,032** Cash transfers



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](https://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 Esmeraldas 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 four partners: HIAS, FEPP, FUDELA, and NRC. It also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Ombudsman's Office, the Public Defender's Office, and 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 programs.
- 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 building resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Livelihood and socioeconomic inclusion projects with HIAS, FUDELA and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion targeting people with vulnerabilities from Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, including youth.
- Awareness-raising events with private actors and host communities for labor recruitment and inclusion.
- Coordination with academic institutions in technical vocational training and entrepreneurship innovation processes, with emphasis on the green and circular economy, gastronomy, fishing, and agricultural sectors.
- Livelihood activities are closely linked to peaceful co-existence, recognizing that Venezuelan, 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

- Co-leader with IOM in 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).