UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Ecuador
Operational Update

N.11 | November 2024

"Somos la raíz de esta comunidad, la ayudamos a crecer cada día más fuerte". Yolis (centro) y sus amigas son promotoras de salud mental en el pueblo amazónico de General Farfán. © ACNUR/Matías Vaca

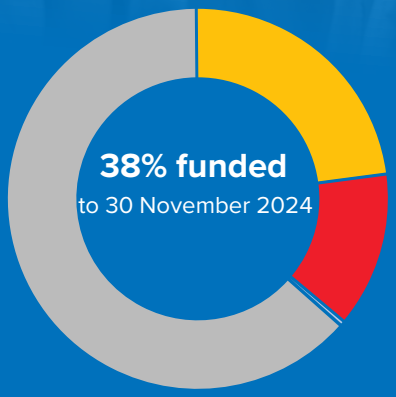
Figures at a glance

Population figures

78,385
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador[1]

95% from neighbouring Colombia

65,780
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

136,312*
refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGres as of the end of November 2024

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

58,264
people received legal guidance & assistance

18,014
people assisted with cash for basic needs and protection

27,747
people supported with collective emergency shelter

11,939
people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

1,378
people linked with a decent employment opportunity

2,613
GBV survivors supported

450
people provided with technical or skills certification

10,773
people received hygiene kits

312
people supported with child protection services

8,095
people supported with community - based protection services

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

Operational context

In November 2024, Ecuador continued to bear witness to forced displacements to and through the country, particularly in regions along the northern border and urban centers. Ongoing violence in neighboring Colombia continues to increase the number of asylum seekers from that country in Ecuador. According to Government figures, nearly 6,500 Colombians had sought asylum by the end of the month – the highest number since 2014. By the end of November 2024, out of the 3,263 individuals registered by UNHCR and partners, 22% corresponds to Colombians (already more than the 21.2% registered in the entire 2023).

This increase in asylum claims takes place amid the continuous displacement of Venezuelans with estimated 684 daily entries and 685 exits in the month of November. These numbers are now comparable to those registered prior to the elections in Venezuela, and a reflection of the ongoing downward trend of Venezuelan movements to the country since last year.

Cuenca, Ecuador, a key place of integration for people forced to flee, experienced significant forest fires, particularly in the Cajas National Park. These fires were part of a larger crisis that has been affecting several provinces in Ecuador, exacerbated by drought. The government declared a 60-day national emergency to address the situation, which included 17 active wildfires and another five that had been controlled. In the provinces of Azuay and Loja, more than 10,000 hectares were consumed by the flames.

Compounding these issues, in November 2024, Ecuador faced significant security challenges. The government declared a 60-day state of emergency to combat escalating violence and criminal activities, particularly in urban areas like Guayaquil. The combination of increased violence, the continued influx of refugees, and climate-related challenges underscores the need for ongoing international support and cooperation to ensure the safety and dignity of all populations including refugees.

In this context, UNHCR continued to work around the clock to provide protection and facilitate assistance and solutions to thousands of people affected by forced displacement, with the support of its donors. Notably, UNHCR received new contributions in November from donors like Japan and the Republic of Korea to support people affected by violence and displacement, including gender-based violence survivors and youth.

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

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in numbers of arrivals in Ecuador. 20,538 people entered Ecuador in November 2024 (5% less than the previous month), with a daily entry average of 684 Venezuelans, compared to exit figures registering 20,573 and 685 daily exits on average (6% less than the previous month). This represents a 29% decrease in entries and a 33% decrease in exits as compared to the same period in 2023. Worthy to note, movement figures this month are now similar to the numbers registered prior to the elections in Venezuela.

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, 6,458 Colombians haves sought asylum so far in 2024, 521 in November, a 24.3% increase as compared to the same month in 2023. In 2024, the number of asylum claims made by Colombians has already surpassed the number registered in 2022 (4,269) and in 2023 (5,245) by 51.28% and 23.13%, respectively. With an average of 587 new asylum claims per month this year (with the highest numbers surpassing 880 claims), UNHCR foresees the total number of Colombian asylum-seekers will be the highest on record since 2014.

6,458 Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2024[2]

521 were registered in November

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

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

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

7% access to documentation[4]

Ecuadorians

Ecuadorians are now the third nationality to cross the Darien jungle, with 16,255 registered in 2024, just after Colombians and Venezuelans. While 2022 saw a spike in Ecuadorians using this route, the numbers have dropped by 80% since January 2024 (2,208) as compared to the figure in November (444), according to Panamanian authorities. However, over 92,000 Ecuadorians had arrived irregularly to Mexico at the end of August 2024, and 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 Registration and Regularization process has been key to enabling refugees and migrants to meet their needs and promote solutions as part of a broader strategy of protection and socioeconomic integration.

Between September 2022 and April 2024, the Ecuadorian Government undertook a registration and regularization process that benefited thousands of refugees and migrants of all nationalities with a Certificate of Migratory Permanence that regularized their stay in the territory until they could obtain a VIRTE visa. By the end of April, 140,277 visa applications had been submitted, 95,809 visas had been granted, and 72,337 identity cards had been issued. More than 199,930 people had been granted a residence permit.

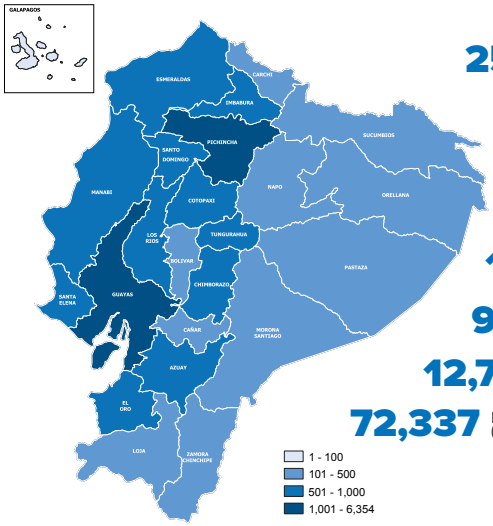
Following the signing of Executive Decree Number 370 of August 23, 2024, which established a migration amnesty process for Venezuelan persons in an irregular situation in the country, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility issued the ministerial agreements that give way to the processes for the renewal of the Migratory Permanence Certificate and the renewal of the VIRTE visa respectively. In addition, on November 19, 2024, Ministerial Agreement 115 was issued, which initiated the process of obtaining the VIRTE II visa, a process through which people would be regularizing their migratory status in the country.

UNHCR, in collaboration with IOM, created and disseminated explanatory videos with community leaders on the renewal processes of the Certificate of Migratory Permanence and the VIRTE visa and cards for social networks with key information on each process. These materials have been disseminated on UNHCR's social networks and shared with GTRM partners to reach the population in a timely manner. Through coordinated actions with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility and the Ministry of the Interior, information is constantly validated to generate other types of information materials and answers to doubts and questions from the population.

UNHCR's support to this new process is thanks to the support of PRM.

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)

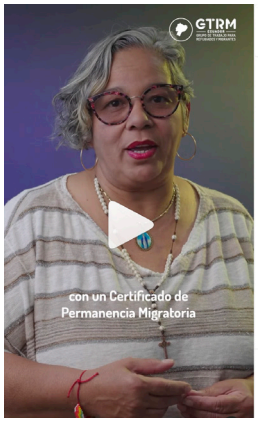
199,930 people with a stay certificate (source: MDI)

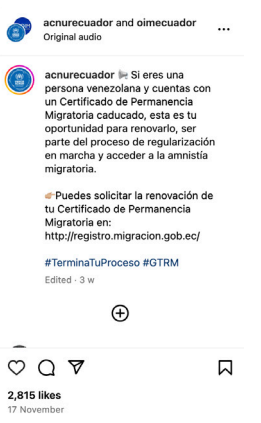
140,277 VIRTE visa applications (source: MREMH)

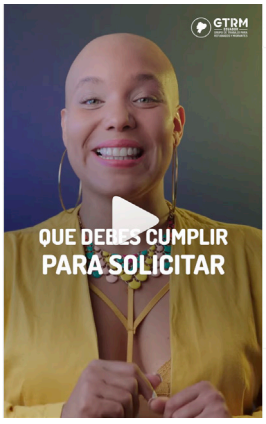
95,809 people with VIRTE visa (source: MREMH)

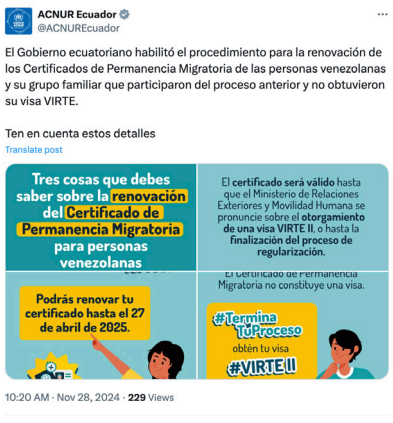
12,768 pending appointments to issue ID (source: DIGERCIC)

72,337 people with ID (source: DIGERCIC)









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.

DELIVERING PROTECTION

NATIONAL

Listen: Breaking the Silence

In the framework of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, eight talented women in human mobility and Ecuadorians from the Taita Imbabura Choral Singing School in Ibarra produced and launched the song “Rompiendo el Silencio,” (Breaking the Silence). This powerful piece, available on YouTube, highlights the voices of these women as they unite to raise awareness and promote solidarity against gender-based violence. Their collaboration not only showcases their musical talents but also underscores the importance of creating safe and supportive environments for all women, free from xenophobia and discrimination. Watch the video here.

LAGO AGRIO

Enhancing access to international protection

In Lago Agrio, UNHCR completed the second brigade of the year together with the Directorate of International Protection of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DPIN) of Ecuador. During this event, 480 people were assisted with documentation and interviews in an area where the presence of institutions is limited. This was made possible thanks to the support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

HUAQUILLAS

Harnessing the power of sports

In Huaquillas, together with youth linked to the Yo Joven Foundation and the Huaquillas Football Club, trained as Young Coaches, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Sports of Ecuador in carrying out activities that integrated children and adolescents. These initiatives promote sports as an essential tool for protection and development, fostering a safe and healthy environment for youth. Through football and other sports activities, UNHCR aims to strengthen social cohesion and offer young people opportunities to grow and develop in a positive and violence-free environment.

PROMOTING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

IBARRA

Breathing inclusion in schools

In Ibarra, UNHCR began the transfer of the “Breathing Inclusion” methodology to 18 teachers at the Cristóbal de Troya Educational Unit. During the self-reflection session, participants explored how social identities influence and shape interactions. This type of initiative is crucial for combating xenophobia in schools, as it fosters an environment of respect and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds. By training teachers in these methodologies, inclusion is promoted, and more cohesive and discrimination-free school communities are built.

MANTA

Expanding access to services

With the valuable support of PRM and in coordination with the Manta mayor's office, UNHCR inaugurated the Community Development Center in the El Palmar community. This space for the integration of refugees, forcibly displaced persons, and the host community promotes training processes for women, the elderly, and community leadership. It is also a safe place for children and adolescents, where their protection and development are fostered. Here, we work together to strengthen the community's capacities, offering tools for access to sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, this center promotes activities that foster leadership and social cohesion, as well as expanding access to services for the entire community.

CUENCA

Promoting family integration

In Cuenca, together with Haciendo Panas, UNHCR conducted a workshop on positive parenting and affectionate fatherhood focused on empathy and communication, aimed at 21 Venezuelan individuals. These workshops are fundamental for strengthening parenting skills and promoting healthy family relationships, especially in contexts of human mobility. Thanks to the support of PRM, we can offer these learning and support spaces, which are essential for the well-being and integration of Venezuelan families in their host communities.

PROMOTING SOCIOECONOMIC INCLUSION

QUITO / GUAYAQUIL

Promoting integration into Ecuador's labour market

In Quito and Guayaquil, UNHCR awarded graduation certificates for the Multifunctional Warehouse Assistant programme, conducted in collaboration with Humboldt Zentrum and Corporación El Rosado. A total of 21 people in human mobility and from the host community completed their training. Thanks to the support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), we continue to promote the socioeconomic integration of forcibly displaced people so they can rebuild their lives while contributing to their host communities.

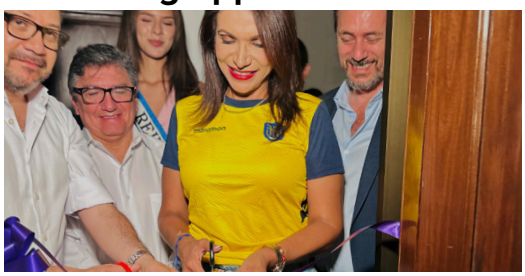
SANTO DOMINGO

Promoting the integration of people forced to flee

In commemoration of the Provincialization of Santo Domingo, UNHCR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Autonomous Decentralized Government of the Province of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas. This alliance marks a new chapter in the joint efforts to protect and support people in human mobility. Through this agreement, both parties committed to improving inter-institutional coordination in the human mobility committee, promoting inclusive public policies that address the needs of these individuals. This will include training public officials in rights protection and fostering an environment conducive to the economic, social, and cultural integration of people in human mobility and their host communities.

MANTA

Increasing opportunities for economic inclusion



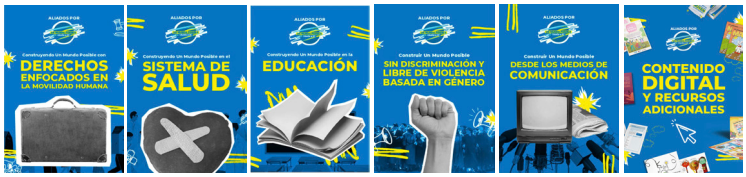
In a joint effort with Inclusión Ecuador and the World Bank, and with the support of UNHCR, the Physical Window of the Social Registry was enabled in Manta. This initiative facilitates access to rights and services for everyone, including forcibly displaced persons. The window, now permanent, allows people to enter their information and access economic services, as well as receive support from Inclusión Ecuador. We are building a possible world where those forced to flee their homes can access new opportunities.

PROMOTING PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

NATIONAL

Toolkit provides an opportunity to create A World of Possibilities

UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility presented the toolkit "Allies for A World of Possibilities," a resource designed to promote protection, integration, and solidarity towards people forced to flee, their host communities, and those seeking safe environments free from xenophobia and discrimination. The toolkit, framed within the "A World of Possibilities" initiative, offers practical and educational resources distributed across five thematic areas: education, health, rights focused on human mobility, media, and the elimination of gender-based violence and zero discrimination. Each area includes materials and community protection methodologies to promote safe and violence-free environments, facilitating work in different community spaces. Learn more.



Download the guides here.

NATIONAL

Rivals on the field, allies for the protection of people forced to flee

During their sports match, Universidad Católica and Aucas showed support for refugees and called on their fans and the Ecuadorian community to welcome those who have been forced to flee with empathy and solidarity. UNHCR Ecuador works alongside Universidad Católica and Aucas to promote the rights of refugees, combat xenophobia, and create violence-free spaces through sports. This match was an opportunity to demonstrate that, although rivals on the field, both teams are committed to sports as a tool for protection, where people can get to know each other, build support networks, and be safe from violence. As a sign of their support and commitment, players from both teams wore armbands with the phrase #WithRefugees.

IBARRA

Adding allies for A World of Possibilities in Sports

In Ibarra, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the professional and training basketball team "Punto Rojo-LR." This alliance aims to promote protection, social cohesion, and the integration of refugees, people in human mobility, and host communities in Ecuador. Through sports, community, and training activities, UNHCR and its allies will foster inclusion through sports.

CLIMATE ACTION

IBARRA

Supporting the response to the fires

In support of the response to the fires in Azuay, UNHCR delivered 900 masks, 200 hydrating drinks, and 200 energy bars to the Benemérito Fire Department. This support was instrumental in ensuring the health and safety of the firefighters who worked tirelessly in dangerous conditions. The masks helped protect them from smoke and harmful particles, while the hydrating drinks and energy bars provided the necessary energy and hydration to maintain their performance during long hours of firefighting.

Through the partnership of UNHCR and HIAS, Yolis became a trained community mental health promoter. "We're not just offering help; we're breaking a silence around mental health that's been there for too long." © UNHCR/Matías Vaca

Roots of healing and resilience through mental health support in General Farfán

LAGO AGRIO

"The journey was exhausting, but the real weight wasn't the miles we traveled. It was what we carried inside," said Yolis Moreno, a 47-year-old Venezuelan woman living in General Farfán, Sucumbíos. Displaced from her native Venezuela, Yolis and her family left behind their land, livelihood, and loved ones. "All I could bring with me were my children. The rest of my family had to stay behind," she recalled, her voice trembling as she recounts the painful goodbye. Like countless others, Yolis journey to Ecuador was not only physically grueling but emotionally shattering.

The effects of forced displacement on mental health are profound. Yolis, like many other forcibly displaced people, arrive in their new homes burdened with trauma, anxiety, and grief. "People think it's just about starting over economically, but the hardest part is healing what's inside," Yolis explained. In General Farfán, she found an opportunity to turn her own struggles into a mission of support. Through the partnership of UNHCR and HIAS, Yolis became a trained community mental health promoter. "We're not just offering help; we're breaking a silence around mental health that's been there for too long."

Yolis' role as a mental health promoter is both challenging and rewarding. "We meet people who arrive with nothing but their pain—young mothers with children, families torn apart," she says. Her work involves listening, guiding, and creating trust. "We tell them, 'You're not alone. Your feelings are valid.'" For cases that require professional care, she connects individuals with psychologists at HIAS. "Sometimes, just being there for someone can change their entire perspective," Yolis added. Her ability to relate deeply to those she helps has made her a cornerstone of the initiative.

Today, Yolis is proud of how far the programme has come. "We started with no resources, and now we have an office where we can welcome those in need," she shared. The community's response has been overwhelmingly positive. "They admire that we're not just surviving—we're giving back," she says. For Yolis, the project represents hope and resilience. "We are the roots of this community, helping it grow stronger every day." The joint efforts of UNHCR, HIAS, and dedicated individuals like Yolis are ensuring that mental health finally receives the attention it deserves, offering a path to healing for displaced families.

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

30 November 2024

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

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For more information: Diana Diaz Rodriguez, External Relations Officer *diazdi@unhcr.org* | **For media queries:** *ecuqumedia@unhcr.org*