



“I arrived with fear... but also full of hope.”
-Anghie

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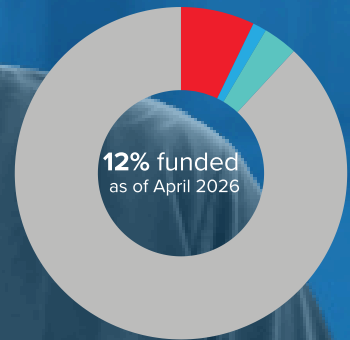
Ecuador

Operational Update
April 2026
No.4

Figures at a glance

Population figures

81,351 **94%**
Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador ² from neighbouring Colombia



65.1 M
required in 2026

- 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 2026 response in figures

19,903 refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGRES as of the end of April 2026



2644

people supported with community - based protection services



3170

people supported with collective emergency shelter



45

people assisted to cover their basic needs and protection



2429

people supported with mental health and psychosocial support



174

people linked with a decent employment opportunity

988

people received hygiene kits



3336

people received legal orientation & assistance



17

people provided with technical or skills certification

1. Historical figure registered by the government since 1978 to the end of April 2026.
2. UNHCR registers active refugee cases in ProGRES. Figures to the end of April 2026

Operational context

Throughout April 2026, Ecuador’s operational environment remained marked by overlapping security, environmental, and socio-economic pressures affecting both host communities and displaced people. While official data indicates a reduction in homicide rates, field-level analysis suggests this reflects a partial containment of violence rather than structural improvement, with criminal dynamics increasingly shifting across territories. These trends suggest monitoring coastal and border regions will be increasingly important in the coming months. According to official data, 2,778 violent deaths were recorded between January–April, compared to 3,150 in the same period last year, an 11.8% decrease. Despite this reduction, the homicide rate remains high nationwide.

Security responses continued under prolonged states of exception. Military and police operations intensified in several provinces, including Esmeraldas, Manabí, Guayas, and Sucumbíos, contributing to heightened fear among communities. In border areas such as Carchi, migration control operations prioritized verification of migration status and criminal records, where UNHCR and partners continued to deliver legal assistance to individuals with international protection needs.

In Esmeraldas and San Lorenzo, security incidents directly affected communities and humanitarian operations, leading to temporary suspension or adaptation of activities and shifts to remote work modalities. Across Ecuador, UNHCR continues to accompany communities to identify risks and engage in localized responses to their needs.

Mobility dynamics at borders remain complex. At Rumichaca, the arrival of displaced families continued, where UNHCR and partners remain committed to facilitating access to assistance and protection services.

Environmental shocks further compounded vulnerabilities.

Heavy rains and flooding affected the Amazon region, particularly in Orellana and Sucumbíos, leading to evacuations, disruption of basic services, and damage to infrastructure, while response capacity remained constrained. In parallel, coastal regions experienced extreme temperatures, and declining water levels in key hydroelectric reservoirs raised concerns over energy supply, which in the past years caused power cuts of over 14 hours daily.

These internal pressures are compounded by regional developments. Escalating violence in southern Colombia continued to influence cross-border movements toward Ecuador. At the same time, shifts in regional migration policies and return intentions are reshaping mobility dynamics. A recent report issued by UNHCR revealed that among Venezuelan survey respondents in Ecuador, around 11% had intentions to return to their country of origin within the next 12 months, and over two thirds would not consider returns in the next five years. This reinforces the need to continue investing in durable solutions and integration in Ecuador. Overall, the context remains highly volatile, with continued reliance on emergency measures, localized violence, and climate-related shocks affecting access to protection, services, and livelihoods. This underlines the need for sustained protection monitoring, strengthened coordination with state and local actors, and continued humanitarian engagement to mitigate risks and support affected populations. In this line, UNHCR continues delivering protection, strengthening national protection systems, while expanding access to services to mitigate risks, uphold rights, and support sustainable integration of displaced populations and vulnerable host communities.

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

Colombians

According to government data, 256 Colombians applied for asylum in Ecuador in April 2026, representing an approximately 28% decline compared to April 2025 and a 22% drop from March 2026, a trend associated with shifting border dynamics, including trade tensions and heightened militarization along the Ecuador–Colombia border. Ecuador continues to host one of the largest historic populations of Colombian refugees. In 2025, Colombians represented 40% of asylum seekers, a 33% decrease from the previous year. Temporary closures of official crossing points and stricter controls have reduced mobility and access to territory, potentially discouraging people with international protection needs from seeking asylum. Colombian households face significant protection needs, primarily related to unmet basic needs (30.6%), followed by lack of legal documentation (17.2%), limited access to services (12.2%), and children at risk of not attending school (7.9%), reflecting layered vulnerabilities affecting access to rights and essential services. Many report threats, persecution, intimidation, or direct violence, confirming that violence and armed conflict in Colombia remain key drivers of displacement. UNHCR projects an important number of asylum claims in 2026.

256 Colombians who have sought asylum in Ecuador in 2026

Main needs of Colombians in Ecuador

56% access to housing

54% access to food

44% access to employment

Venezuelans

Venezuelans continue to lead in the number of arrivals to Ecuador, although mobility trends show signs of gradual stabilization. In April 2026, an estimated 18,140 people entered the country, representing a slight decrease of 1.9% compared to the previous month, with a daily average of approximately 605 arrivals. During the same period, an estimated 17,450 people left the country, reflecting a marginal decrease of 1.0% compared to March. As a result, the net migration balance stood at approximately 690 people who entered and remained in the country during the reporting period.

According to government data, 591 Venezuelans sought asylum in Ecuador in April 2026 (2,321 in 2025), a 32.5% increase compared to the same month in 2025. Venezuelan asylum seekers currently represent 65% of all asylum applications processed in Ecuador in 2026, a trend that has been consistently observed since 2024, while the 2026 number accounts for 40% of [DD1] the total registered in 2025. This reinforces both the continued need for support and the sustained interest in accessing international protection. Moreover, with no avenues for regularization, the asylum system has become increasingly relevant for those with protection needs

Population entry and exit figures have been compiled by the GTRMs in Ecuador’s border areas (Tulcán, Lago Agrio, and Huaquillas) with qualitative and quantitative information on mixed movement trends. These figures are not triangulated with neighboring countries.

440.450 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador²

45% estimated to be between 18 and 45 years old

25% estimated to have a higher education degree

Main needs³

55% access to food

67% access to housing or shelter

53% access to livelihoods or employment

Ecuadorians

By mid- 2025, over 103,000 Ecuadorian asylum-seekers were pending a decision on their claims, while around 5,000 had been recognized as refugees – the majority in the United States, Spain, Mexico and Italy (followed by Perú and Canada). The Ombudspersons Office, with support from UNHCR and ECHO, launched a report on internal displacement in 2025 which estimates that over 315,000 Ecuadorians had been internally displaced between 2022 and 2024. See the [executive summary here](#).



HUMANITARIANS AT WORK



I'M OMAR, AND IF YOUR PHOTO APPEARS HERE, I MAY HAVE HAD THE HONOR OF PHOTOGRAPHING YOU. FOR NEARLY FIVE YEARS, I'VE WORKED IN COMMUNICATIONS FOR UNHCR IN ECUADOR, MEETING PEOPLE WHO FLED TO SAVE THEIR LIVES AND ARE NOW REBUILDING THEIR DREAMS. THEIR STORIES GUIDE MY WORK: COMMUNICATION IS NOT JUST ABOUT INFORMING BUT TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES AND FOSTERING SOLIDARITY. WHAT WE SHARE SHAPES HOW WE WELCOME REFUGEES. I AIM TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THAT NO ONE CHOOSES TO BE A REFUGEE, AND THAT EMPATHY SAVES LIVES. I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE TRUST OF THOSE WHO SHARE THEIR STORIES. IF ONE IMAGE MAKES YOU REFLECT, THE WORK IS DONE.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD

DELIVERING PROTECTION



How UNHCR makes a difference:

Seeking asylum is a fundamental human right, and Ecuador has built one of the strongest asylum systems in the region to uphold it. UNHCR supports the Government by safeguarding access to territory and fair asylum procedures, providing legal and community-based protection, and translating international protection standards into real access to rights at the local level. Through its presence on the ground, technical expertise, data-driven analysis and coordination with national and local actors, UNHCR helps address immediate protection risks while strengthening sustainable protection systems, fostering social cohesion and enabling refugees and host communities to live safely, with dignity, and stability. [To learn more, check out protection fact sheet.](#)

IBARRA, CARCHI AND GUAYAQUIL
Expanding access to legal services through the “Ruta de los Derechos”

In Ibarra and Carchi, UNHCR supported the rollout of the Public Defender’s Office initiative “Ruta de los Derechos,” bringing free legal services closer to communities across multiple cantons and rural parishes. With the participation of GTRM partners and civil society, the initiative provided legal orientation on asylum, regularization, and access to rights. Similar efforts were supported in Guayas through mobile and door-to-door services, strengthening access to justice for displaced populations and host communities, with support from ECHO.



2. According to data estimated by the Refugee and Migrant Working Group (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish).
3. Fifth R4V Joint Needs Assessment. www.r4v.info

TULCÁN, SAN LORENZO, LAGO AGRIO

Expanding access to protection through mobile outreach across the northern border

UNHCR and partners, including the Public Defender’s Office, WFP, and ADRA, are delivering mobile protection services to bring assistance closer to people in remote and underserved areas. Across locations such as El Coca, Joya de los Sachas, Bolívar, Espejo, Pedernales, Tonchigüe, and San Gabriel, interventions included registration, access to asylum procedures through digital mechanisms, legal orientation on documentation and regularization, and referrals for specialized follow-up. Mobile teams also identified diverse protection profiles and provided complementary support to those with specific needs. These efforts were made with support from ECHO.



ESMERALDAS

Strengthening coordination for gender mainstreaming in Esmeraldas

In Esmeraldas, UNHCR supported the III Provincial Gender Roundtable, bringing together local actors to strengthen coordination, exchange experiences, and advance strategies on gender equality and protection. This space reinforced joint efforts to address risks affecting women and diverse groups, promoting more inclusive and coordinated responses.



MANTA

Strengthening municipal capacities and expanding access to health and information services

In Manta, UNHCR, together with Casa de la Niñez, HIAS, NRC, RET, and CISP, delivered a capacity-building workshop for new municipal staff who are beginning frontline functions supporting people in human mobility. The session covered services available and core concepts of international protection and asylum, strengthening technical readiness and referral awareness to improve direct assistance and access to rights. Also, in San Eloy, UNHCR supported a medical outreach at CDC Isabel Muentes providing consultations, orientation, and medication. In addition, participants received information on access to rights and documentation procedures reinforcing linkages between health and protection services.



SAN GABRIEL, CARCHI

Strengthening peer support and psychosocial skills among adolescents

In San Gabriel, UNHCR and HIAS implemented the methodology “I support my friends” through five sessions with the Montúfar Adolescent Club, engaging local and displaced participants. The intervention focused on strengthening peer support skills and psychological first aid. Final evaluation findings reflect strong performance in responding to high-risk scenarios, alongside improvements in communication, relationships, and group cohesion.



GUAYAQUIL

Promoting protection through sports-based activities

In Guayaquil, CDH and UNHCR, with support from LIV Golf, implemented vacation activities “I play for Peace” in Saucos 3, Fundación Oasis en el Desierto, and Nueva Esperanza de Monte Sinaí. The initiative combined sports practices inspired by golf with learning activities on protection. Similar golf activities were carried out in Esmeraldas and San Lorenzo, reinforcing safe, inclusive spaces for children and adolescents.



GUAYAQUIL

Strengthening GBV prevention and community engagement

In Guayaquil, UNHCR conducted a GBV prevention workshop in Nueva Esperanza de Monte Sinaí addressing structural causes of GBV through participatory methodologies to address the root causes of GBV. In San Mateo, UNHCR also carried out a painting activity at the Community Development Center together with the local women, reinforcing engagement through participatory spaces that promote reflection and community cohesion.



LAGO AGRIO

Strengthening sexual and reproductive rights capacities

UNHCR, in coordination with SURKUNA, conducted targeted sessions to strengthen tools for the defense and guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights for people in vulnerable situations, including refugees and asylum seekers. The activities engaged humanitarian workers and members of local protection systems, reinforcing practical approaches to rights-based support. A complementary session strengthened capacities of health personnel on addressing sexual and reproductive rights for refugee and asylum-seeking women who are survivors of sexual violence, improving preparedness and survivor-centered service delivery.



LAGO AGRIO

Promoting youth expression through music

In Lago Agrio, UNHCR and Sucumbíos Solidario supported the launch of the music video “Frenesí,” a song created by a group of local youth and adolescents. Through music, participants highlighted a positive pathway to express their stories, emotions, and aspirations, strengthening participation, inclusion, and psychosocial wellbeing through creative community-based approaches.



LAGO AGRIO

Strengthening safe spaces and resilience for children and youth in Lago Agrio

In Lago Agrio, UNHCR implemented community-based protection activities at the “Maloca de los Panas,” using immersive approaches to strengthen children’s and adolescents’ skills. Activities included environmental cinema, educational games, and virtual reality. With Sucumbíos Solidario, refugee and host community students joined sessions on refuge awareness and bullying prevention, strengthening decision-making and peaceful coexistence. Implemented with local authorities and partners, these activities help consolidate safe spaces for children.



PROMOTING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

Forcibly displaced people are part of the solution for Ecuador’s development. UNHCR works with national and local systems to promote their social and economic integration, supporting regular documentation, access to formal employment, education, entrepreneurship, financial services and ensuring misinformation and xenophobia are addressed at all levels. Advocating for inclusive policies and partnering with businesses, training institutions and local actors, UNHCR helps refugees build sustainable livelihoods, fill labour gaps in key productive sectors, and contribute skills, taxes and innovation to the local economy. These solutions-oriented approaches strengthen social cohesion, reduce protection risks, and generate long-term benefits for both forcibly displaced people and host communities.

SUCUMBÍOS

Promoting market linkages and economic inclusion in Sucumbíos

In Sucumbíos, UNHCR supported a business linkage initiative in coordination with the Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade and Investments and the Chamber of Tourism of Sucumbíos (CAPTUR). The event brought together entrepreneurs and local hotels to promote commercialization opportunities, resulting in initial purchase agreements that enabled entrepreneurs to begin supplying their products to local businesses. This initiative strengthens access to markets and supports sustainable livelihoods for displaced populations and host communities.



TULCAN

Strengthening livelihoods through entrepreneurship in Carchi

In Tulcán, UNHCR, in coordination with HIAS and the Prefecture of Carchi, concluded the first phase of the entrepreneurship project “Ideas que se fortalecen,” supporting local business development and economic inclusion. The initiative engaged entrepreneurs from both refugee and host communities, strengthening their capacities and promoting opportunities for sustainable income generation.





“Empathy can transform lives, even in the most difficult moments.”

A Teacher building new beginnings

Creating inclusion and hope through education in Guayaquil

© UNHCR/Bill Vargas

Anghie Rodríguez, 39, is a special education teacher from Caracas, Venezuela. For over 15 years, she worked with children and adolescents with autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy, supporting their learning, their autonomy, and their dignity. Her life was rooted in routine, care, and purpose.

But as conditions in Venezuela deteriorated, and stability began to disappear.

For Anghie, the stark decision to leave was not only about her own future, but about protecting her son and supporting her parents’ health needs. With fear, determination, and hope, she left her country alone and arrived in Ecuador to start again.

“I arrived with fear... but also with hope,” she says.

In Guayaquil, integration was not immediate. Despite her experience, gaining trust was a challenge. Some families hesitated to leave their children with a foreign teacher. But Anghie persisted, offering low-cost tutoring in her community, one student at a time. Slowly, trust grew.

Today, Anghie provides academic support and specialized attention to children and adolescents in Saucos 3.

“Through my work, I strive not only to strengthen learning outcomes, but also to create safe spaces for children who need guidance, patience, and understanding” she says. She also participates in community activities, supporting local initiatives that promote inclusion, connection and security among residents.

Her work reflects the power of education as a tool for protection and integration.

With the support of community spaces and initiatives where UNHCR works alongside local actors, Anghie has been able to connect, contribute, and rebuild her role as an educator. These spaces enable displaced people and host communities to come together, access opportunities, and strengthen social cohesion.

Anghie says that for her, “integration starts when people trust each other.”

Anghie’s story shows that displaced people are not only rebuilding their lives, but they are also actively strengthening the communities that welcome them. Through her commitment, she is helping children learn, families connect, and communities grow stronger- one student, one lesson, one act of empathy at a time.

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

April 2026

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