UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

"My story only makes sense if it can serve others".
Luis, venezuelan

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Ecuador

Operational Update

July 2026

No.7

Figures at a glance

Population figures

81,673 94% from neighbouring Colombia

Historical figure of refugees recognized by Ecuador [2]

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

50,683 refugees and other displaced people supported and registered in proGres as of the end of July 2026

5,282 people supported with community - based protection services

5,857 people supported with collective emergency shelter

1,056 people assisted to cover their basic needs and protection

1,908 people received hygiene kits

6,030 people supported with mental health and psychosocial support

251 people linked with a decent employment opportunity

7,476 people received legal orientation & assistance to access asylum services

178 people provided with technical or skills certification

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

Operational context

Ecuador continued to operate in a complex protection environment marked by persistent insecurity, economic uncertainty and emerging climate-related risks. Despite the continuation of nationwide security measures and intensified law enforcement operations against organized crime, violence remained a significant concern in several parts of the country particularly in border areas and coastal regions.

These conditions continue to affect forcibly displaced populations, who are often concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas where insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities and restricted access to services increase protection risks. Ongoing insecurity also constrained humanitarian access in some locations and increased operational challenges for humanitarian actors.

Ecuador reopened the Macará-La Tina border crossing with Peru in Loja after a six-month closure implemented as part of efforts to combat organized crime and arms trafficking. The reopening restored an important route for cross-border mobility, family reunification and access to services for border communities while maintaining strengthened security controls.

At the same time, concerns grew over the country's energy outlook ahead of the dry season. Electricity demand reached historic levels, while authorities advanced contingency measures in response to forecasts indicating a potential moderate-to-strong El Niño event. The combination of possible energy shortages and climate-related impacts, including risks to agricultural production and livelihoods, could further affect vulnerable populations already facing displacement or protection risks.

UNHCR continued working alongside the Government of Ecuador and local partners to support refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable host communities affected by violence and displacement. Through protection monitoring, legal assistance, case management, community-based protection activities and targeted humanitarian support, UNHCR helped people access safety, services and their rights, while strengthening the capacity of local authorities and communities to respond to growing protection needs and helping affected families rebuild their lives with dignity, stability and renewed opportunities for the future.

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

Colombians

According to government data, 1452 Colombians applied for asylum in Ecuador in July 2026 (3221 in 2026), representing a 207% increase compared to June 2026 and a 375% increase from the same period last year. Ecuador continues to host one of the largest populations of Colombian refugees historically. In 2026, 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 asylums claims in 2026.

3321 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 represent the largest share of arrivals to Ecuador, while mobility trends remain relatively stable. In July 2026, an estimated 18,186 people entered the country, representing a 4.5% increase compared to the previous month, with a daily average of approximately 587 arrivals. During the same period, an estimated 16,038 people departed Ecuador, representing a 3.6% decrease compared to June. As a result, the migration balance stood at approximately 2,148 people who entered and remained in the country during the reporting period, indicating a moderate increase compared to the previous month.

According to government data, 979 Venezuelans sought asylum in Ecuador in July 2026 (3,851 in 2026), a 78% increase compared to May 2026, and a 157% increase compared to the same month in 2025. Venezuelan asylum seekers currently represent 64% of all asylum applications processed in Ecuador in 2026, a trend that has been consistently observed since 2024, while the 2026 number accounts for 66% of 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 international protection needs.

Population entry and exit figures have been compiled by the GTRMs in Ecuador's border areas with qualitative and quantitative information on mixed movement trends. These figures are not triangulated with neighboring countries.

440.450 [2]

Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Ecuador

45% between 18 and 45 years old
25% have a higher education degree

Main needs of Venezuelans in Ecuador:[3]

55% access to food
67% access to housing or shelter
53% access to livelihoods or employment

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

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**.

ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD

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.
To learn more, check out protection fact sheet.

LAGO AGRIO

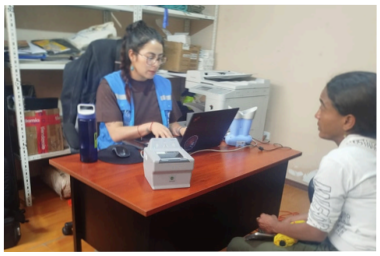
World Refugee Day Event Celebrates Refugee Contributions.

UNHCR, with the Ministry of Human Development and the Ministry of Government through Centro Violeta, held the closing event of the 2026 World Refugee Day commemoration. The event brought together approximately 60 representatives from public institutions, NGOs, and civil society, who participated in a photo exhibition and an entrepreneurship fair "Entrepreneurship Without Borders," highlighting refugee resilience, integration, and contributions.

TULCÁN

Protecting those Seeking Safety

Across San Gabriel, Ibarra, Bolívar Canton and El Carmelo, UNHCR, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Defender's Office and partners, provided protection, registration and legal assistance to people affected by forced displacement. Support included access to RSD, documentation, legal counselling and case follow-up, with particular attention to individuals with specific protection needs. This was pssible thanks to the contribution of ECHO.



NARANJAL, GUAYAQUIL

UNHCR Expands Access to Information and Protection Services

UNHCR activated an outreach service point at the Salón de la Ciudad in Naranjal, providing families with information on UNHCR's presence and work. The activity highlighted the importance of registration, which contributes to understanding displacement and mobility trends at the national level, while allowing individuals to receive guidance on available protection services. UNHCR is grateful for the support of KOICA, which enables the delivery of protection and assistance to people and communities most in need.

ESMERALDAS

Bringing Protection Closer to communities

UNHCR strengthened mobile protection efforts in Las Peñas, San Lorenzo, and the Ricaurte parish. These activities were carried out in coordination with partners such as HIAS and the Public Defender's Office, helping to improve access to protection and specialized services for the most vulnerable communities, this was possible thanks to the contirbutions of public sector donors like KOICA and ECHO.

TULCAN

Connecting Institutions, Strengthening Protection

UNHCR strengthened inter-institutional coordination by supporting a GTRM workshop that enhanced the capacities of 30 representatives from key public institutions on international protection, refugee status determination, access to justice, and rights protection mechanisms through practical sessions led by government and protection actors.

ESMERALDAS

Enhancing communities' responses to Gender Based Violence

UNHCR has initiated a capacity-strengthening process with the community-based organization Fundación Dariana Isabel to enhance community-led prevention and response to gender-based violence. Through training, technical support, and awareness-raising activities, local capacities will be strengthened to build more resilient communities. UNHCR is grateful for the generous support of KOICA, which makes it possible to strengthen community capacities and advance protection efforts at the local level.

TULCÁN

Playing for Protection and Inclusion

UNHCR and FUDELA, implemented sports-for-protection activities in San Gabriel, Otavalo, and Ibarra, providing safe and inclusive spaces for children and adolescents. Activities in San Gabriel included a summer camp where 45 children engaged in positive use-of-time activities during the school break. These community-based initiatives that promoted protection, social cohesion, and positive development. UNHCR gratefully acknowledges the generous support of LIV Golf, which made these activities possible.

LAGO AGRIO

Art and Dance Courses Promote Community Well-Being

UNHCR, with RET, the Casa de la Cultura Benjamín Carrión – Sucumbíos Branch, and the Ministry of Human Development, inaugurated holiday dance and painting courses for 45 refugees, migrants, and members of the host community, including children, adolescents, and adults. The initiative promotes safe spaces for learning, recreation, and artistic expression during the holiday period, strengthening community-based protection, psychosocial well-being, inclusion, and social cohesion.

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, UNHCR helps refugees build sustainable livelihoods, fill labour gaps in key productive sectors, and contribute skills, taxes and innovation to the local economy.

LAGO AGRIO

Customer Service Training Strengthens Private Sector Partnerships

UNHCR, with Monteza training company, conducted a customer service workshop for staff from a local hardware company as part of efforts to strengthen partnerships with the private sector. The training enhanced staff skills to improve service quality and consolidate a strategic alliance with the company, reaffirming the role of the private sector as a key actor in creating opportunities for labor inclusion and economic integration for refugees and members of host communities.

LAGO AGRIO

Financial Education Strengthens Refugee Women Inclusion

UNHCR with Banco Codesarrollo conducted a financial education session for refugee women entrepreneurs, aimed at strengthening their knowledge of savings, financial planning, and access to financial services. The initiative provided guidance on opening savings accounts and accessing productive credit options, strengthening financial inclusion and promoting tools to support the growth and sustainability of their businesses.

TULCAN

Conclusion of the "Raíces de Oportunidad"

The Ibarra GAD, supported by UNHCR, FUDELA, GTRM, PUCE and the Ibarra Chamber of Commerce led the Shark Tank event held in the Municipal Business Development Center. The event regrouped 28 entrepreneurs and followed the conclusion of the "Raíces de Oportunidad" Entrepreneurship School (2nd edition). The 20 most outstanding entrepreneurs from the program will receive seed capital.

Stories from the field

"Starting over taught me that dignity is not defined by the job you have, but by the determination to keep moving forward."

Luis, venezuelan

From Starting Over to Giving Back: *How Luis Turned Displacement into a Lifeline for Others*

© UNHCR/Diana Díaz

Luis was born in Anzoátegui, Venezuela, and always dreamed of becoming a journalist. After years of hard work, he achieved that goal and began working for one of the country's leading television channels. But as the situation in Venezuela deteriorated, daily life became increasingly difficult. A personal tragedy marked a turning point when he and his partner lost a child during pregnancy. Realizing he could no longer guarantee a stable future, Luis made the difficult decision to flee.

Leaving was painful. Unsure if he would ever return, he packed only a few belongings, including his documents, his university degree, and a photograph and watch that had belonged to his late father. Arriving in Ecuador, he relied on the support of a friend who welcomed him into her home while he searched for ways to rebuild his life.

The first years were challenging. Unable to immediately continue his career, Luis worked as a waiter while adapting to a new country and starting over from scratch. Yet he remained determined to move forward, gradually reconnecting with his profession while discovering a growing desire to help others facing similar challenges. "Starting over taught me that dignity is not defined by the job you have, but by the determination to keep moving forward."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Luis lost his job and found himself in need of assistance. At one of the most difficult moments of his life, he received a food basket from someone he had never met. The gesture left a lasting impression and changed the way he viewed solidarity.

Inspired by that experience, he began organizing support for others and eventually founded Fundación Manos Venezolanas. Today, the organization helps displaced and vulnerable families access guidance, referrals, food assistance, and other essential support, restoring hope and a sense of belonging for people trying to rebuild their lives.
"My story only makes sense if it can serve others. As long as I can, I will keep building bridges for people who, like me, had to start again."

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

July 2026

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UNHCR Ecuador is grateful for the support from private donors

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