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## UNHCR'S WORK IN IMBABURA AND CARCHI

### General information

UNHCR's offices in Ibarra and Tulcán, located in the provinces of Imbabura and Carchi respectively, are near the Colombian-Ecuadorian border, which is one of the areas most affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. UNHCR's work in these provinces focuses on attending refugees and asylum-seekers and implementing projects conducive to the integration of the refugee population in the recipient communities. Technical and financial support for the Ecuadorian State have helped to improve and decentralize protection systems. Rumichaca International Bridge, joining Ecuador and Colombia, which is constantly used as an entry point for Colombians fleeing from the violence of the internal conflict in their country, is in the province of Carchi.

### Statistics:

- 4,258 recognized refugees and 1,934 asylum-seekers live in the province of Imbabura.
- 4,842 recognized refugees and 1,756 asylum-seekers live in the province of Carchi.
- 80% of the refugee population in Imbabura is estimated to live in marginal urban districts of Ibarra.
- Approximately 3,000 people of the Awá indigenous nationality live in border communities in Imbabura and Carchi; several of them have been recognized as refugees.
- Roughly 60% of the refugee population in Carchi lives in rural areas, 42% of whom are children, adolescents and women.
- In Carchi, UNHCR receives a daily average of five new cases of people expressing interest in requesting asylum in Ecuador.
- 99% of the refugees and asylum-seekers in both provinces are Colombian nationals.

### Protection strategies and rights approach

**Personalized attention:** UNHCR offers legal advisory services and facilitates information on access to the asylum procedure in Ecuador. It also coordinates with partner agencies to provide humanitarian assistance, both material and non-material (psychological attention, employment guidance, etc.).

**Capacity building for strategic allies:** Technical support is given to civil society in the form of training and consultancy, for example to the *Fundación Mujer y Género* [Women's Identity and Gender Foundation]. Free legal aid is offered by the Catholic University in Ibarra, while the Scalabriniana Mission and the Jesuit Service for Refugees and Migrants in Tulcán provide legal, psychological and social assistance to the refugee and local population. UNHCR furthermore works with Human Rights Defence Offices, *Comisarías de la Mujer* (judicial bodies for reporting abuses against women) and Centres for the Protection of Rights, among others.

**Protection networks:** UNHCR maintains technical cooperation to strengthen and create protection networks, promoting the exercise and enforceability of the rights of the refugee population, while fostering better coordination among civil society, international cooperation, and public and private institutions.

**Raising awareness and sensitivity:** UNHCR encourages spaces for information and communication, coordinating and making agreements with a variety of organizations. In Ibarra, UNHCR and the television channel of the state university (*Universidad Técnica del Norte*) produce and broadcast a monthly TV programme on the refugee issue and human rights, the aim of which is to raise awareness and sensitivity on these topics among hundreds of Ecuadorian and refugee families in the Andean area along the northern border of Ecuador within the range of this channel.

**Protection strategies in urban areas:** Through community participation in neighbourhoods, in coordination with neighbourhood leaders, town councils and local organizations, UNHCR nurtures local and social integration. In Ibarra, it carries out protection activities based on physical presence, identifying specific needs and offering the necessary assistance to asylum seekers and the refugee population living in urban areas.

**Protection strategies in rural areas:** This is done through visits to local authorities as well as community leaders and organizations to tighten bonds of trust and identify the needs of the population. Technical advice is provided in border parishes to update contingency plans and strengthen early-warning systems as an immediate response in case of a mass influx of people in need of international protection owing to the internal armed conflict in Colombia.

## In 2011:

- Over 3,000 interventions have been made with people and families requesting access to the asylum process and guidance on topics related to documentation, access to rights, deportation, etc.
- Over 50 training and awareness-raising events have been held, including seminars, workshops, caravans, fairs, and community and neighbourhood activities in both urban and rural areas, addressed to over 5,000 people, including refugees, local population, journalists, members of the police and armed forces, students, civil servants, representatives of civil society, etc.

## **Projects aimed at local and refugee population groups in the provinces of Imbabura and Carchi**

### **Income generation**

- Implementation of 223 family commercial farms in rural areas, raising small animals in Montúfar, Bolívar and Huaca cantons in Carchi province, and Ibarra in Imbabura province.
- Training for 81 refugees, providing them with the basic management tools for bolstering their micro-businesses in Ibarra. Strengthening of the artisanal capacity of 90 people (Colombian and Ecuadorian) to improve the quality and marketing of their hand-crafted products in Ibarra, San Gabriel and Tulcán. At the end of the process, the participants in these programmes received a seed capital to support their micro-businesses.

### **Education**

- Upgrading of basic infrastructure and donation of educational material to 17 primary schools of the Bilingual Intercultural Authority of the Awá indigenous nationality and seven schools of the Hispanic Education Authority, attended by over 1,200 children in total.
- Donation of educational material and furniture for the state secondary schools of Yahuarcocha and Atahualpa in Alpachaca, a marginal urban district of Ibarra with a high refugee population.

### **Health**

- Construction of a house for the doctor of the health sub-centre of Lita in Imbabura, a parish inhabited by refugees of different social groups and indigenous Awá population.
- Support for projects on Sexual Rights and Reproductive Health, and the prevention of HIV-AIDS, aimed at young adults. These projects, revolving around art and culture, were implemented by the Provincial Health Authority of Imbabura and the Federation of Community Associations of Carchi (FEDACC for its initials in Spanish).

### **Infrastructure**

- Renewal of the children's park in La Bola Amarilla urban neighbourhood in Ibarra.
- Help with building the dressmaking workshop of the Pastoral Migratoria in the district of Caranqui in Ibarra, which currently benefits refugees, migrants and the local population.
- Remodelling of the bathroom units in the Cristo Peregrino shelter for refugees and asylum seekers, run by the Pastoral Migratoria in Ibarra.
- Building of three early learning centres: one in El Carmelo, a border parish near Tulcán; one in the Don Bosco district of Julio Andrade parish; and one in the Centenario district of San Gabriel, all in the province of Carchi.

### **Organizational strengthening**

- Support for the Information Office at Rumichaca International Border Post, attending refugees, migrants and tourists, within the framework of the Colombian-Ecuadorian Binational Commonwealth.

### **Binational projects**

- Recovery of the collective memory and bolstering of a common identity in the district of La Victoria in Colombia and the parish of El Carmelo in Ecuador, in conjunction with UNHCR-Pasto.
- Promotion of a project on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border for the institutional strengthening of the Pastoral Social centres in Ipiales and Tumaco in Colombia, and Esmeraldas and Tulcán in Ecuador.

**For further information on UNHCR's work, see [www.acnur.org](http://www.acnur.org) or [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)**

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Rumichaca International Bridge, joining Ecuador and Colombia, is in Carchi; this is where Colombians fleeing from the violence of the internal conflict in Colombia enter the country. UNHCR/M. Fernández



UNHCR offers legal guidance services and provides information on the asylum process. UNHCR/Tulcán



Through an agreement with the *Universidad Técnica del Norte*, a programme on human rights and the refugee population is produced and broadcast every month. UNHCR/M.Fernández



Training processes for public and private institutions, along with civil society, on refugee issues and human rights. UNHCR/Ibarra



Protection and integration strategies with young adults in peripheral urban areas. Spaces for the expression of urban culture through art, dance and games. UNHCR/J. Rojas



Equipping of the legal aid offices of the Catholic University in Ibarra, where this free service is provided and mediation processes are facilitated for the local and the refugee population in case of the need for dispute settlement.

UNHCR/K León



Integral farm in the educational centre in the Chitan de Navarrete community in Carchi Province (food security). UNHCR/Tulcán



Construction of the early learning centre in the border community of El Carmelo. Thirty-five Ecuadorian and refugee children benefit from the project, which is coordinated with State institutions. UNHCR/ D. Yépez



Activities in the frame of the awareness-raising campaign “Living Together in Solidarity” against discrimination and xenophobia. UNHCR/D. Yépez