UNHCR ECUADOR

April 2011

Some Data and important facts

- Ecuador has the highest number of refugees in Latin America.
- Until December 2010, there were 53,342 recognized refugees.
- Nearly 98% of recognized refugees are Colombians nationals.
- 8 out 10 Colombian asylum seekers in the world seek international protection in Ecuador.
- The Enhanced Registration process recognized 27,740 refugees in a one-year period (March 2009 – March 2010).
- It is estimated that 1,500 refugees enter Ecuador every month, crossing over the northern border.

General context

Ecuador has the largest refugee population in Latin America, mostly fleeing the internal armed conflict in neighboring Colombia. Until December 2010, 53,342 persons have been recognized as refugees in Ecuador. Sixty percent of the refugees live in urban areas; the others mostly stay near the border. Around 70% of the refugee population are women, girls and boys.

Ecuador shares a 640 kilometers long border with Colombia, from the Pacific Coast to the Amazon. UNHCR in Ecuador works from four field locations along the Northern border and in the capital Quito and other urban areas in the south.

This year UNHCR has set itself four goals: 1) bolstering the asylum procedure in Ecuador; 2) seeking durable solutions and access to rights; 3) providing initial humanitarian assistance and satisfying basic needs; 4) taking steps against xenophobia and discrimination. Transversal approaches of UNHCR's work in Ecuador include initiatives with adolescents and young adults, as well as with the indigenous and Afro-descendent population, while also furthering the fight against gender violence.

Legal framework

Ecuador ratified a new Constitution through a vast majority of votes in a referendum dated September 2008. The new Constitution has a very strong human rights orientation and contains provisions and concepts such as "universal citizenship", "human mobility" and the right to seek asylum and transit through the territory.

Of interest to UNHCR is the Chapter on Human Mobility in which the issue of refugees features prominently, as do guarantees for their international protection. As party to the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugee Status, the Ecuadorian government supports UNHCR's work and fosters policies that benefit refugees, in line with its international obligations.

UNHCR objectives in ECUADOR

Special attention to CHILDREN and ADOLESCENTS

Fighting GENDER violence

Focusing on DIVERSITY – Indigenous Communities

UNHCR Ecuador – Main Fields of Action 2011

1. ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

- Improving access to documentation to refugees and asylum seekers.
- Guarantee access of refugees and asylum seekers to RSD procedure (Refugee Status Determination)
- Capacity building to governmental institutions

2. SEARCH FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS EFFECTIVE

- Focusing all efforts on local integration activities
- Enhancing the resettlement programme, in particular Solidarity resettlement South-South.
- Voluntary repatriation

3. INITIAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE – BASIC NEEDS

- Introduction of a voucher system which allows refugees the access to basic products.
- Strengthening UNHCR protection networks.

4. CAMPAING AGAINST XENOPHOBIA AND

- Strengthening links with local media, information platforms and journalists.
- Consolidating the campaign against xenophobia and discrimination "Living Together in Solidarity", launched by the civil society, Government, UN system and UNHCR.

UNHCR presence in Ecuador

UNHCR has **7 offices** in Ecuador.

Oficinas de ACNUR
Quito, Santo Domingo, Cuenca, Ibarra, Tulcán, Lago Agrio, Esmeraldas

COLOMBIA
ESMERALDAS   TULCÁN
IBARRA
LAGO AGRIO
SANTO DOMINGO   QUITO
ECUADOR
CUENCA
PERÚ

UNHCR has **85 workforce**, 70 nationals and 15 internationals.

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People of concern to UNHCR

Type of Population	Total as at December 2010	
	Total	*UNHCR-assisted*
Recognized Refugees	*53,342*	*53,342*

The way forward (2011 – 2012)

In the context of an increasing refugee-flow, estimated 1,500 per month, UNHCR main priorities are:

● Bolstering the processes of registration, eligibility and documentation of refugees, providing technical support to the Refugee Directorate (DR), a dependency of the Ecuadorian Ministry of International Relations, Commerce and integration.

●Strengthen local integration of refugee population through community projects adapted to the socio-economic contexts (urban / rural) of the host communities.

● Strengthen the resettlement program to a third country as a protection tool; using it strategically as a responsibility-sharing mechanism in the Southern Cone to alleviate pressure in Ecuador as the main recipient of Colombian refugees.

● Promote an integrated approach to combat gender based violence through project activities that benefit refugee women who live under difficult conditions, particularly those head of households.

● Implement the campaign *Convivir en Solidaridad* jointly with UN agencies, NGOs, and governmental agencies in order to promote an harmonious coexistence between the different social groups living in Ecuador such as women and men; girls, boys and adolescents; indigenous and Afro-descendants; refugees and migrants; people with different social orientations and religion; among others.

● Empower refugee population through the promotion of inclusive policies; the exercise of their social, economic and cultural rights; prioritizing the needs of women, children and adolescents as well as those from indigenous and afro-Colombians groups.

Parternship

Refugee Directorate – Ministry of Foreing Affairs, Trade and Integration; Ecuadorian Red Cross; *Federación de Artesanos Recolectores de Productos Bioacuáticos del Manglar* (FEDARPOM); *Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio* (FEPP); *Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad* (FAS); Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS); Jesuit Refugee Service (SJRM); OXFAM Italy; *Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos; Fundación Labaka, Misión Scalabriniana.*

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