

Ecuador

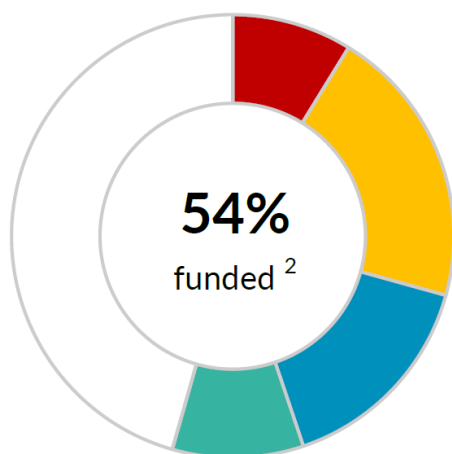
September 2019

UNHCR in Ecuador supports the national authorities to protect and assist the largest recognised refugee population in Latin America. Ecuador hosts more than 68,000 recognized refugees (mainly Colombians) and has become a main destination and transit country for refugees and migrants from Venezuela. UNHCR Ecuador's operation focuses on facilitating access to territory, asylum and legal status and providing durable solutions to persons of concern, as well as strengthening host communities' capacity to integrate refugees and contribute to a pacific coexistence. The goal is to gradually include persons of concern in national policies and plans, not only as beneficiaries, but as economically active members of the population, with the same rights and obligations as Ecuadorians, but also with the same opportunities to contribute to the country's development.

FUNDING (AS OF SEPTEMBER 2019)

USD 38 million

requested for the Ecuador operation



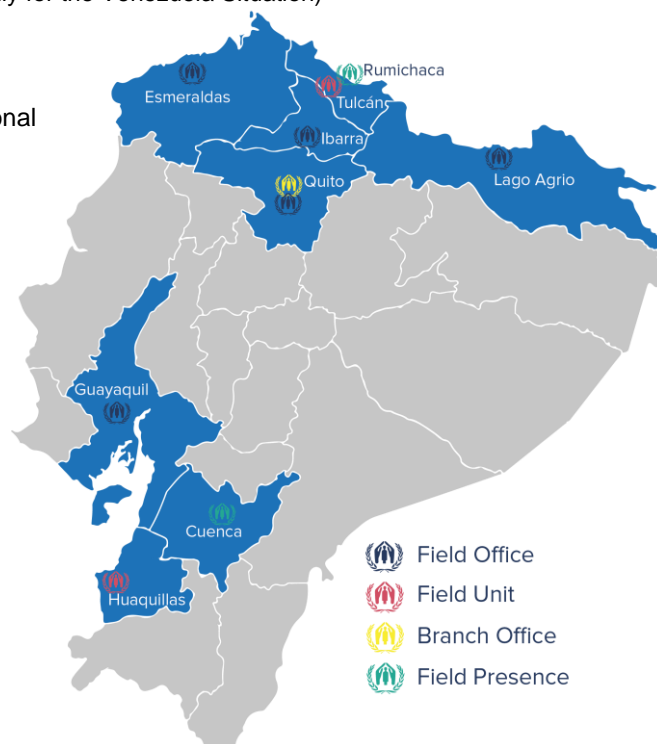
- Tightly earmarked
- Earmarked
- Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
- Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
- Funding gap (indicative)

UNHCR PRESENCE

Grand Total: 149
(47 specifically for the Venezuela Situation)

Staff:
 96 Total:
 23 International
 73 National

Affiliate Workforce:
 44 Total
 26 UNOPS
 9 Other
 9 Interns



KEY FIGURES

- **68,203 recognized refugees** since 1989, representing the largest population of recognized refugees in Latin America.
- **12,200 new asylum seekers in 2019**, of whom **8,900** were Venezuelans and **3,300** Colombians (up to 31 July)
- The **overall number of asylum applications** increased by **250%** in 2018.
- **370,000 refugees and migrants from Venezuela** in Ecuador between 2016 and September 2019 (**139,000** since the beginning of 2019).

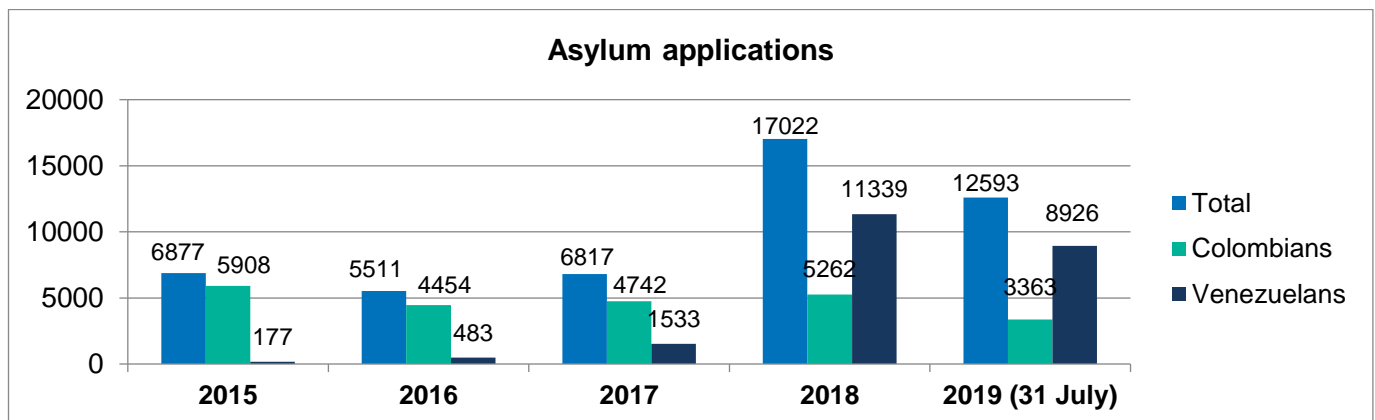
Operational context

Venezuela Situation

Since 2016, more than 4.7 million Venezuelans have left their country, making this the largest exodus in Latin America's history. Of these, 1.7 million have entered Ecuador, of whom 377,000 Venezuelans have settled in the country. In 2019, approximately 2,000 Venezuelans per day entered Ecuador (with peaks of 6,000) until 26 August, when Ecuador started requiring visas for Venezuelans. Since 2018, the number of Venezuelan asylum seekers surpassed the number of asylum seekers from Colombia. According to UNHCR's protection monitoring, in 2019, almost four out of ten Venezuelans made at least part of their journey on foot, and three out of ten have specific needs (pregnant women, unaccompanied or separated children, people with disabilities or chronic/catastrophic diseases and elderly).

Colombia Situation

For more than 30 years, Colombians have been forced to leave their country as a result of the armed conflict. Despite the peace agreement signed between the Colombian Government and the FARC in 2016, the number of Colombians seeking international protection has increased. During 2018, the security situation on the border with Colombia deteriorated. The presence of criminal organizations caused an increase in the arrivals of Colombian asylum seekers (+11% compared to 2017). Risk profiles include children and adolescents, social and community leaders, and displaced families. In August 2019, former FARC commanders announced to have taken up arms again, which is likely to result in further increases in of forced displacement.



UNHCR Response

Ensuring Access to Quality Asylum

UNHCR seeks to improve the quality of asylum in Ecuador, by providing technical advice in the drafting of legislation and the development of administrative practices according to international standards. In addition, UNHCR helps to strengthen the national Refugee Status Determination (RSD) system through financial and technical support to the authorities and by strengthening the capacities of the Ombudsman's and the Public Defender's Office in providing free and quality legal advice to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Protection

UNHCR has strengthened its permanent presence at the three main entry points on Ecuador's Northern border with Colombia (Rumichaca and San Miguel) and Southern border with Peru (Huaquillas), identifying vulnerable cases and cases in need of international protection, providing immediate assistance to those with the most urgent needs, and giving information to new arrivals. UNHCR also provides shelter and humanitarian aid with hygiene kits and blankets to Venezuelans in transit and those who choose to remain in Ecuador. Additionally, UNHCR conducts specific protection and training activities to public institutions and NGOs on child protection and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and has worked with the Government and UNICEF in the development of protocols for child protection, especially for unaccompanied and separated minors. UNHCR supports various shelters for women at risk or victims of SGBV and has financed the creation of the first LGBTI shelter in Ecuador. Other UNHCR projects specifically target youth in border areas at risk of recruitment by illegal armed groups. The office advocates for public policies, favourable legislation and improved administrative practices to lower barriers to access the territory and obtain a legal status. Currently,

the office is working with the government and in coordination with IOM, to provide support for the planned registration and regularization exercises of Venezuelans in Ecuador.

Durable solutions

UNHCR pursues local integration by promoting and facilitating the exercise of refugees' rights and access to social services on a par with nationals; by facilitating migration alternatives such as the MERCOSUR, UNASUR and Amparo visas which can be extended and lead to permanent residency; and through public information campaigns against xenophobia and discrimination, together with civil society organizations and government institutions. Voluntary repatriation is not (yet) an option for most persons of concern in Ecuador. UNHCR runs a resettlement program for more than 700 refugees every year.

Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance

To enhance community empowerment and self-reliance, UNHCR provides vocational training and guidance on opportunities in the labour market and strengthens the role of the private and public sectors, to improve the access of persons of concern to formal employment; promotes the generation of livelihood opportunities through provision of seed capital and technical assistance; implements a program of higher education scholarships for refugee youth; and facilitates financial services such as opening of bank accounts and access to credit. UNHCR still works with the Graduation Model (through its partner HIAS) which has been successful in lifting some 10,000 persons out of extreme poverty since 2015 and has been transformed into a pilot with the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion (MIES), targeting Ecuadorians as well as persons of concern. UNHCR livelihoods programs particularly target women, particularly to provide alternatives to dependency on abusive breadwinners or to other negative coping mechanisms.

Working with Partners and other Institutions

Governmental Institutions

In line with the Ecuador's National Plan for Development, *Toda una Vida* (2017-2021), UNHCR works to strengthen alliances focused on the promotion of public policies that advance the local integration of refugees in Ecuador. UNHCR is one of the 23 United Nations agencies that signed the Cooperation Framework with the Ecuadorian government - previously called the UNDAF - (2019-2022), and works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES), the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC), the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES), the National Assembly and other state institutions such as the Public Defender's Office and the Ombudsman's Office, as well as decentralized autonomous governments at different levels.

Regional Inter-Agency Coordination Platform

In line with the Secretary General's decision in 2018 to task UNHCR and IOM to coordinate the operational response to the Venezuela situation, UNHCR has actively supported the setting-up of a functioning inter-agency coordination structure known in Ecuador as *Grupo de Trabajo sobre Personas Refugiadas y Migrantes* (GTRM) bringing together 24 UN agencies and NGOs, resulting in the coordinated Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants (RMRP) from Venezuela (RMRP). The RMRP focuses on four key areas: direct emergency assistance; protection; socioeconomic and cultural integration; and capacity building and support to host governments.

Other partners

To strengthen its response in different working areas such as humanitarian assistance, child protection, SGBV prevention, LGBTI protection, community empowerment and self – reliance, among others, UNHCR works together with 17 specialized local and national partners.

CONTACT:

Ilaria Rapido Ragazzino
Senior Public Information Assistant
rapido@unhcr.org
Tel: +593 99 4013 567

LINKS

www.acnur.org/ecuador
<http://help.unhcr.org/ecuador>
Twitter: @ACNUREcuador