

## **UNHCR'S WORK IN THE PROVINCE OF SUCUMBÍOS**

### **General Information**

UNHCR Sub Office Lago Agrio (in the Amazonian Sucumbíos province) was opened in 2000. For the past decade, the Colombian conflict has worsened significantly making this border province the main recipient of thousands of people that fled Colombia seeking protection. As of today, after Pichincha (Quito), Sucumbíos province hosts the biggest refugee population in the country.

The Sucumbíos Province borders the Colombian Department of Putumayo and less than half of its 129,000 inhabitants live in urban areas. Official reports estimate that 60% of the population lives under the poverty line, well above the national average of 37%. Oil exploitation in the area, which started in the early 1960s, has produced serious damage to the environment and communities throughout the province.

#### **Statistics and profile of the refugee population:**

In the provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana live **13,502** recognized refugees. Among the latter, approximately **2,400** reside in remote communities along the San Miguel and Putumayo rivers bordering Colombia.

- **99%** of asylum seekers in these two provinces are Colombian nationals.
- In 2010 (January-August), the Ecuadorian Refugee Directorate Office in Lago Agrio has registered **4,377** new individuals, i.e. an average of 360 new asylum claims per month (18 persons daily).

### **Sub Office Lago Agrio priorities**

**Border communities.** UNHCR works in more than 40 communities located on the banks of the San Miguel and Putumayo rivers, where 60% of the population are refugees. This remote and inaccessible area (mostly accessed by river) suffers from a historical lack of State presence and reduced socioeconomic development. Access to public services, such as health, education and water/sanitation, is very limited, and the continuous presence of armed actors puts at risk the integrity of these communities.

According to the local government, 24% of inhabitants of Lago Agrio are refugees. To promote integration and peaceful co-existence, UNHCR works in cooperation with local authorities and includes Ecuadorian nationals and host communities within their beneficiaries in all community projects.

**Urban centers.** Through strong collaboration with Municipalities and other local governments, UNHCR is continuously identifying the needs of refugees living in the main urban centers of the province. Through participatory processes, UNHCR seeks to engage refugees and local authorities in policy making and development plans. As a result of this cooperation and integration policies, Lago Agrio was named "Solidar City" in 2010.

**Institutional capacity building and strengthening of public institutions.** UNHCR works together with local institutions, such as the Refugee Directorate Office, the Ombudsman's office, the Public Prosecutor Office, the Police and the Armed Forces to guarantee that refugees have effective access to their rights. During 2010 UNHCR has provided over 50 training sessions to more than 800 people, including journalists, members of the police and the armed forces, students, implementing partners, public service providers,... UNHCR also supports civil society organizations, such as the Women's Federation of Sucumbíos and the Church of Sucumbíos, which are crucial for strengthening our protection networks

## Main activities & Quick Impact Projects:

### Health

- One health center opened in Puerto Nuevo. Medical brigades and primary school children registry supported.
- Ten health centers (including two mobile units) equipped in the province.
- Training of 84 health promoters and delivery of communal handbook, first aid kits in 42 border refugee hosting communities.

### Education

- In cooperation with the Education Provincial Directorate, ten schools opened and 250 children benefited.
- One child care center opened in Puerto Nuevo and 80 children and their families benefited.

### Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

- Legal aid, counseling and shelter provided for refugee women victims of sexual and gender based violence.
- Training to civil servants in Sucumbíos and Orellana on the application of the attention protocol for victims of SGBV.
- One women's safe house constructed in refugee host community of La Ceiba.
- Facilities built in the Lago Agrio and Coca Friendly houses (game hall, dinning room, psychology and legal counseling offices, security wall...)

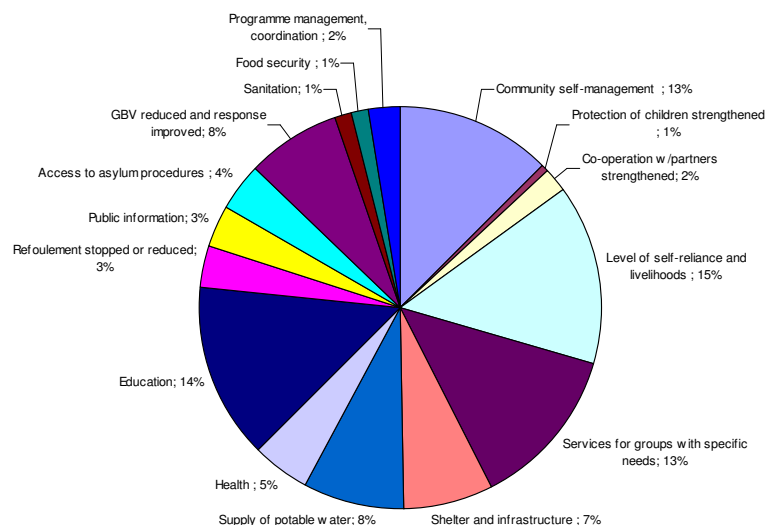
### Livelihoods

- Improvement of sustainable crop production technical abilities and implementation of home gardens (rice, cocoa, coffee, corn...) in 18 refugee hosting communities.
- Micro-credit an communitarian credit unions.

### Water & Sanitation

- Construction of safe water systems in 20 host communities
- Sanitation infrastructure built in Barranca Bermeja
- School sanitation facilities built in 14 communities

**Sub-Office Lago Agrio's budget by areas of intervention**



For further information visit: [www.unhcr.org/](http://www.unhcr.org/) [www.acnur.org/](http://www.acnur.org/)

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International Child Day in Lago Agrio



Participatory Assessment in Putumayo River community



Safe water system in El Litoral, Putumayo River.



Legal assistance is also provided in communities.



Ecuadorian actor Roberto Manrique offered a circus show in several borderline communities



Medical ship allows accessing a public health service in far-off areas



Opening of a health center in San Miguel River.



*El Río habla*, weekly broadcasting in Radio Sucumbios, allows frontier population explaining their concerns.



Implementing partners and authorities join participatory assessments.



UNHCR holds regular workshops with public and private institutions on refugee issues.



New primary school in Villahermosa, Río San Miguel



Farming workshops help borderline communities to improve food safety and production.