

Ecuador

UNHCR's Protection and Assistance Programme

March 2004



Context

The deterioration of the Colombian conflict has caused a steady increase of populations crossing the border, as much as 1000 per month, to seek refuge. In 2003, the national Eligibility Committee further strengthened its capacity to respond to the growing number of applicants and succeeded in clearing the backlog through 42 Eligibility Commissions held during 2003. 64 sessions of the Eligibility Commissions are scheduled for 2004.

The cases of Colombian refugees in need of resettlement are also increasing. It is estimated that some 600 persons will need to be resettled during 2004. In order to seek security, Colombians are increasingly moving to provinces that are more distant from the northern border, which has put additional pressure on UNHCR and

its implementing partners (IPs) to provide the adequate protection and assistance to a widely dispersed population of concern.

UNHCR Beneficiaries by status (at December 2003)

Since January 2000 a total of **21,721** Colombians were registered and have requested asylum in Ecuador.

Refugees: **6,378** persons (of whom 98% Colombians residing mostly in Quito, Ibarra, Lago Agrio, Tulcan, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, Cuenca and Santo Domingo).

Legal Framework: The Presidential Decree 3301/92 constitutes the legislation on refugees in Ecuador. It reflects almost entirely the 1951 Convention and includes the extended refugee definition contained in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. The national Eligibility Commission (composed of three ministerial members) is the decision-making body granting asylum to refugees in Ecuador. UNHCR and its IPs do not have the right to vote, but participate in all the sessions and submit recommendations on each individual case.

Working with Partners

2003 Achievements

- UNHCR has reinforced its capacity and those of the Refugee Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implementing partners through the recruitment of protection staff and intensified training on refugee law and related issues.
- The Unit for the Analysis of Special Protection Needs (UANEP) in Quito has facilitated the resettlement of some 400 persons to third countries.
- UNHCR documented more than 95 per cent of the persons of concern in the country.
- 23 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) were implemented, from which 22,376 persons benefited (out of whom 25 per cent were Colombians)
- An extensive UNHCR/implementing partner(IP) presence has been established throughout Ecuador to allow for better access to the Colombian refugee population. Permanent presence has been established in 8 locations, with regular missions to the other areas.
- 37 training sessions on protection were carried out for some 3,035 civil and military authorities.
- Ecuador implemented a new identity card (ID) system since February 2003, which allows the print of three different types of individual IDs: Asylum-Seekers, Refugees and Temporary Protection. This system replaced the costly travel documents and visa.
- Negotiations with UNIFEM, UNICEF, PAHO, UNDP, UNVs and WFP concluded with the signature of an inter-agency agreement which provided support in education, health, food and infrastructure to host communities and refugees in border provinces

2004 Priorities

- Strengthen the protection mechanisms by: maintaining and reinforcing UNHCR's and IPs' presence in the relevant border areas; training police, armed forces and local authorities on refugee issues; and keeping up-to-date contingency plans.
- Reinforce institutional capacities, both at the governmental and non-governmental level, for a fair and expeditious reception, registration, documentation, assistance and integration of refugees.
- Ensure that all the procedural guarantees of refugee status determination (RSD) procedure are adhered to.
- Hand over to the Government a modified and improved database system which corresponds fully to UNHCR HQ's standards by March 2004.
- Find resettlement solutions for refugees facing security concerns or with other specific needs, with joint support from HQ and resettlement countries.
- Implement QIPs to promote the integration of Colombians into Ecuador, and address the basic needs of the host communities in border areas.
- Increase UNHCR's co-ordination with UN agencies to better provide services and protection to refugees and host communities.

- The Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) provided 28 university-level scholarships to qualified refugees, to be implemented during 2004

UNHCR's 2004 budget: USD 2,141,487 (operational budget: USD 1,430,000; administrative budget: incl. administrative costs related to assistance to refugees: USD 711,487).

Earmarked contributions received in 2004 (as of 08 March)

Earmarked contributions for UNHCR's Programme in Ecuador specifically have not yet been received. However, the Programme will benefit from the below-listed contributions which are broadly earmarked for countries in the region that are hosting Colombian asylum-seekers and refugees, as follows:

Canada	USD 381,679
Sweden	USD 1,098,901
United States	USD 1,500,000

UNHCR's Government Counterpart in Ecuador

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA): Interviews asylum-seekers and issues IDs for asylum-seekers and refugees. Responsible for the determination of RSD.

UNHCR's Implementing Partners in Ecuador

- **Episcopal Conference of Ecuador (represented by the Comité Pro Refugiados):** Registers asylum-seekers. Provides basic humanitarian assistance and counselling to asylum-seekers and needy refugees. Provides support to refugee pupils (books, uniforms and registration fees). Funds income-generation activities (small businesses, mainly commercial activities) and provides legal assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers.
- **Diocese of Sucumbíos (ISAMIS):** Provides basic humanitarian assistance including shelter and health services to asylum-seekers and refugees. Provides support to refugee pupils (books, uniforms and registration fees). Administers the Apafano Reception Centre and funds small income-generating activities (mainly agricultural projects).
- **Diocese of Ibarra:** Registers asylum seekers. Provides basic humanitarian assistance to asylum-seekers and needy refugees. Provides support to refugee pupils (books, uniforms and registration fees). Offers community services to refugees. Administers three community centres in Ibarra, Tulcan and San Lorenzo. Funds small income-generating projects and provides legal representation of refugees.
- **Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio (FEPP):** Manages a micro-credit fund for small loans to refugee families in Sucumbíos, Pichincha and Imbabura, and implements small community projects in refugee-receiving communities in Sucumbíos.
- **United Nations Volunteers:** Deploys two international and two national UNVs to Ecuador.
- **Fundación Fabian Ponce (FFP):** Responsible for the eligibility process to register asylum-seekers. Provides legal assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees.

- **Autogestion, Desarrollo y Sociedad (ADYS):** Provides training and technical assistance on low-cost and organic home vegetable gardening.
- **Red-Cross of Ecuador (ERC):** Provides basic humanitarian assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees in Sucumbíos.
- **Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad (FAS)** Jointly with UNHCR, in charge of the planning, coordination, execution, monitoring and evaluation of the QIPs in the northern border provinces (Sucumbios, Carchi, Imbabura and Esmeraldas). Also provides advice on urban projects in Pichincha. FAS will form a technical team in Quito and all the above listed provinces, and in coordination with MFA and UNHCR, identify beneficiary communities and implement QIPs.

UNHCR's International Partners

GTZ and **IOM** supports UNHCR activities in terms of monetary assistance or equipment to IPs.

Since April 2003, UNHCR's humanitarian assistance is complemented by the **World Food Programme (WFP)**, which provides food to those refugee and asylum-seeker households in need.