

ECUADOR

| Operational highlights |

- The re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Ecuador and Colombia eased relations between the two neighbours. As host to the largest refugee population in Latin America, Ecuador has kept its borders open to continuous flows of Colombian refugees.
- During 2011, an average of up to 1,500 monthly new arrivals from Colombia put additional pressure to Ecuador's efforts to comply with international protection standards. UNHCR advocated for the inclusion of protection safeguards in admissibility procedures.
- In line with its urban refugee policy, UNHCR opened a Field Office in Guayaquil to respond to the needs of people of concern in Ecuador's biggest city.
- UNHCR strengthened its response to unaccompanied minors (UAM) arriving in Ecuador. This has become more important as human trafficking of young people and children has increased in the border areas.
- During 2011, 800 refugees were submitted for resettlement, mainly to Canada, the United States, New Zealand and emerging resettlement countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay.

| Working environment |

Following the presidential election in Colombia in 2011, bilateral commissions with Ecuador were reactivated, including one on refugees. With the easing of relations and Colombia's adoption of the Law on Victims and Land Restitution, discussions on voluntary repatriation gained importance. UNHCR has shared its views on voluntary repatriation with the Government, and is coordinating potential repatriation plans with the Refugee Directorate and with IOM. According to a study undertaken in 2010, the majority of the refugee population did not express interest in voluntary repatriation. In light of the new developments, a new survey is to be conducted in 2012.



Over the past few years the Ecuadorian army has significantly increased its presence along the border, and cooperation on security issues with the Colombian authorities has improved. However, the presence of irregular armed groups has continued to have an impact on the security of local and refugee populations residing in northern Ecuador, particularly in the three border provinces of Esmeraldas, Carchi and Sucumbios.

Persons of concern

Type of Population	Origin	Total	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Per cent female	Per cent under 18
Refugees	Colombia	54,200	54,200	48	25
	Various	800	800	34	8
People in a refugee-like situation	Colombia	68,300	-	-	-
Asylum-seekers	Colombia	20,800	20,800	52	26
	Cuba	150	150	75	-
	Peru	140	140	69	4
	Haiti	100	100	68	7
	Various	350	350	85	7
Total		144,840	76,540		



Colombian refugees receive legal advice from UNHCR in a border community in Carchi.

UNHCR / F. TOVOLI

Refugees in Ecuador have settled along the border and in urban areas where competition for scarce resources is high. They must compete for housing, jobs and access to basic services. While access to health and education are guaranteed by State laws, refugees found that obtaining concrete access to services remained a daunting challenge. Moreover, refugees faced difficulties in getting work permits and thus accessing regular employment. As a consequence, they sometimes had to revert to the informal sector where employers do not register them in the social security system.

| Achievements and impact |

● *Main objectives and targets*

UNHCR maintained a significant presence in the border area to ensure adequate protection monitoring. At the same time, many refugees moved on from the three provinces to urban centres, particularly Quito and Guayaquil, justifying the added efforts to ensure effective implementation of UNHCR's urban refugee policy.

Favourable protection environment

- Some 27,700 refugees were recognized under the Enhanced Registration Exercise implemented in 2009-2010 by the Refugee Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the support of UNHCR. This population currently lacks the necessary support from the international community to identify suitable solutions.

Fair protection processes

- The influx of asylum-seekers from Colombia has increased considerably during the year. Due to the

overwhelming numbers, the Ecuadorian Government's capacity to manage the volume of applications and make timely decisions has been limited, necessitating continued support from UNHCR. The Office supported the Refugee Directorate to address the main challenges, including reducing the existing backlog, renewing refugees' visas, and organizing mobile brigades to border areas. With many Colombians unable to gain access to asylum procedures, the vulnerability of people looking for international protection increased.

Security from violence and exploitation

- UNHCR addressed sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) with the support of a network of civil society organizations. Even though prevention of SGBV and identification of victims of violence remained a challenge, legal and psychosocial support was provided, and a number of victims were presented for resettlement. There was a need to step up initiatives to support survivors of SGBV, particularly in the border areas, and to provide them with immediate support, which often included evacuation to safe houses in other parts of Ecuador.

Basic needs and services

- The operation in Ecuador continued to provide basic humanitarian assistance to needy asylum-seekers and new refugees. In coordination with partner agencies and WFP, refugees and asylum-seekers were provided with minimum assistance packages containing food and non-food items (NFIs). A voucher programme for needy refugees was also introduced, enabling them to receive additional assistance. The humanitarian assistance

programme focused on the promotion of self-reliance initiatives that allow refugees to gain independence through employment and self-employment schemes. These projects enhanced the refugees' prospects of local integration.

Community participation and self-management

- In various regions with a high concentration of refugees, UNHCR implemented community-based projects benefiting refugees and host populations alike. With the support of local authorities, investments were made in schools, health and community centres, and water and sanitation projects, to improve coexistence among refugees and local communities. These projects have also helped UNHCR to gain access to remote areas where few humanitarian or development actors were present.

Durable solutions

- In 2011, efforts to achieve sustainable integration and refugee self-reliance remained constrained, while voluntary repatriation options for refugees were limited. During the year, UNHCR strengthened its resettlement programme to meet increased demand. Some 800 refugees were submitted for resettlement to Argentina, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Uruguay during the year, and about half of them departed for their new homes. These departures mainly comprised Colombian refugees who were with physical protection needs (33 per cent), survivors of violence and/or torture (26 per cent), those with a lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions (22 per cent) and women at risk (16 per cent).

External relations

- Throughout 2011 UNHCR implemented the public information campaign *Convivir en Solidaridad* (Living Together in Solidarity), launched in 2010 through a broad alliance with governmental and civil society institutions. The campaign addressed prejudice directed at the refugee population.

| Constraints |

During 2011, the Directorate General for Refugees estimated that up to 1,500 individuals crossed the border from Colombia each month. This resulted in additional pressure on the Ecuadorian authorities in their efforts to comply with international protection standards. Since the beginning of 2011, the Government's refugee policy has become more stringent with regard to admissibility and access to the asylum procedure, requiring UNHCR to give higher priority to protection activities as part of its country strategy.

Owing to a significant number of manifestly unfounded asylum claims in the past, admissibility procedures were introduced in 2011. UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of protection safeguards that would enable adequate access to procedures to those deserving international protection.

In addition, lack of physical security; the presence of Colombian irregular armed groups; violence towards refugee women and girls; the vulnerable situation of

adolescent refugees and unaccompanied minors at risk of forced recruitment; and the directing of public anger over the lack of security in the country towards refugees, have contributed to reducing protection space in both border areas and urban settings.

| Financial information |

In 2011, as in previous years, UNHCR's programmes in Ecuador faced significant funding gaps to address the concrete needs of asylum-seekers and refugees. UNHCR's total budget amounted to more than USD 21.6 million but only USD 11.4 million were made available due to limited resources.

| Organization and implementation |

By the end of 2011, UNHCR had strengthened its presence along the northern border with offices in Esmeraldas and Lago Agrio. The urban refugee policy was given priority by the field offices in Quito and Guayaquil, where the majority of urban refugees reside. The operational strategy focused on supporting the integration and self-sufficiency of the refugee population, moving away from dependence on humanitarian assistance.

| UNHCR's presence in 2011 |

□ Number of offices	7
□ Total staff	83
International	10
National	45
JPOs	2
UNVs	23
Others	3

| Working with others |

During 2011 the operation worked with 13 implementing partners with extensive experience and presence in the field, of which only three are international NGOs. This partnership, especially with local organizations, has allowed UNHCR to expand its presence in the border area and improve protection delivery at the field level.

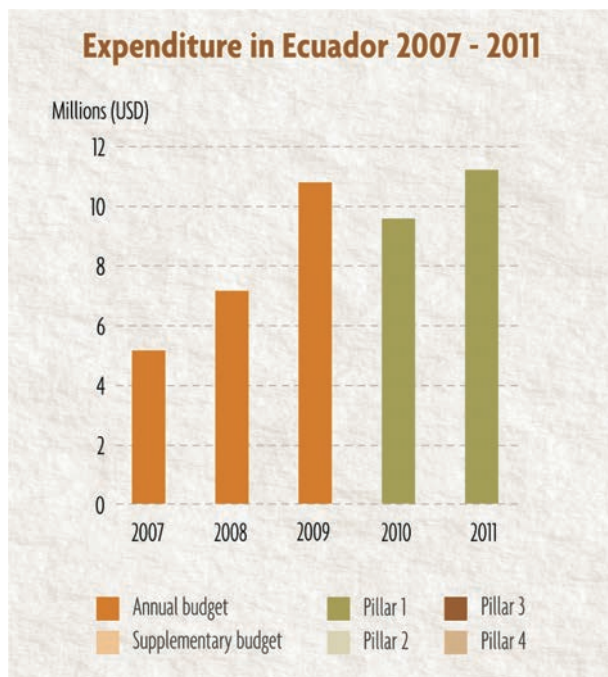
Despite limited financial resources, the contribution of the Ecuadorian Government in terms of providing basic services to the refugee population had a positive impact for the beneficiaries.

UNHCR coordinates the Technical Inter-agency Group for the Northern Border (comprising 16 agencies), as well as implementing activities run jointly with WFP (Food Distribution), UNFPA (HIV and AIDS-related project), IOM (community infrastructure, such as schools, clinics), UNDP and other UN agencies.

| Overall assessment |

Changes in the context and reduced refugee recognition rates led to shifts in operational priorities, giving more prominence to sectors such as fair protection processes and documentation, meeting basic needs and providing essential services, notably for the most vulnerable cases, as well as to

Expenditure in Ecuador 2007 - 2011



activities for the protection of children and women at risk. Considerable resources were also devoted for supporting victims of violence and the lodging of resettlement candidates in safe houses.

| Unmet needs |

- Around 3,000 refugees could not be assisted with income-generation activities; this particularly affected the operation's objective of increasing refugee self-reliance.
- Four projects along the border area to support community strengthening and women's leadership were not implemented.
- Although the need for legal services increased, it was not possible to establish three legal clinics in the important locations of Esmeraldas, Tulcán and Santo Domingo.

- Approximately 40 per cent of people of concern had no access to legal assistance or legal remedies.
- Due to limited resources, only a few media networks were included in the advocacy and anti-discrimination campaign; and information about the refugee situation in Ecuador could not be disseminated nationwide as planned.
- Only a limited number of capacity-building activities could be carried out.
- Approximately 2,000 eligible refugees did not receive any support during the naturalization process.
- At least 1,200 children did not receive school materials or support to enrol in public education.
- Only 15 per cent of asylum-seekers received domestic items through the distribution of humanitarian assistance vouchers.

Partners

Implementing partners

NGOs: *Consortio de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales a favor de la familia e infancia, Corporación Mujer a Mujer, Ecuadorian Red Cross, Federación de Artesanos Recolectores de Productos Bioacuáticos del Manglar, Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbios, Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio, Fundación Alejandro Labaka, Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad, Fundación Tarabita, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Jesuit Refugee Service, Misión Scalabriniana, Oxfam Italy*

Others: UNV

Operational partners

Government agencies: Directorate for Refugees - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Others: IOM, PAHO/WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WFP

Budget, income and expenditure in Ecuador | USD

	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	Total
FINAL BUDGET	21,638,637	21,638,637
Income from contributions ¹	3,414,578	3,414,578
Other funds available	7,953,757	7,953,757
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE	11,368,335	11,368,335
EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN		
<i>Favourable protection environment</i>		
National legal framework	113,125	113,125
National and regional migration policy	99,601	99,601
Cooperation with partners	224,357	224,357
National development policies	115,252	115,252
Public attitudes towards persons of concern	224,120	224,120
<i>Non-refoulement</i>	160,206	160,206
Subtotal	936,661	936,661

	PILLAR 1 Refugee programme	Total
<i>Fair protection processes and documentation</i>		
Registration and profiling	165,475	165,475
Access to asylum procedures	615,030	615,030
Fair and efficient status determination	571,321	571,321
Civil status documentation	113,756	113,756
Subtotal	1,465,582	1,465,582
<i>Security from violence and exploitation</i>		
Impact on host communities	462,537	462,537
Effects of armed conflict	338,915	338,915
Gender-based violence	214,854	214,854
Protection of children	202,627	202,627
Freedom of movement	65,354	65,354
Non-arbitrary detention	63,411	63,411
Access to legal remedies	116,535	116,535
Subtotal	1,464,233	1,464,233
<i>Basic needs and essential services</i>		
Water	182,390	182,390
Shelter and other infrastructure	395,033	395,033
Basic domestic and hygiene items	186,642	186,642
Primary health care	207,975	207,975
HIV and AIDS	69,143	69,143
Education	529,681	529,681
Services for groups with specific needs	484,384	484,384
Subtotal	2,055,248	2,055,248
<i>Community participation and self-management</i>		
Community self-management	375,377	375,377
Self-reliance and livelihoods	805,380	805,380
Subtotal	1,180,757	1,180,757
<i>Durable solutions</i>		
Resettlement	312,139	312,139
Local integration	168,560	168,560
Reduction of statelessness	116,936	116,936
Subtotal	597,635	597,635
<i>External relations</i>		
Resource mobilisation	179,048	179,048
Public information	309,681	309,681
Subtotal	488,729	488,729
<i>Logistics and operations support</i>		
Supply chain and logistics	843,655	843,655
Programme management and coordination	1,169,612	1,169,612
Subtotal	2,013,267	2,013,267
Balance of instalments with implementing partners	1,166,222	1,166,222
Total	11,368,334	11,368,334