

# ECUADOR

## | Working environment |

### ● The context

With presidential elections scheduled for early 2013, national security is high on the political agenda in Ecuador. This could have a direct impact on the asylum system and protection for Colombian refugees in the country. Though the flow of people in search of protection in Ecuador remains high, access to asylum has become difficult, particularly since the adoption of the new, more restrictive Refugee Decree 1182.

Constructive diplomatic relations between Ecuador and Colombia have eased tensions between the two neighbours. Over the past few years the Ecuadorian army has significantly increased its presence along the border, and cooperation with its Colombian counterparts has improved.

However, the activities of illegal armed groups in the border region affect the security of local and refugee populations. The spillover of the Colombian conflict into northern Ecuador has made the need for international protection greater, particularly in the border provinces of Esmeraldas, Carchi and Sucumbíos, where the flow of new arrivals continues unabated. UNHCR maintains a significant presence in the border area to ensure adequate protection monitoring.

Many refugees move from the border areas to large cities, particularly Quito and Guayaquil, where they mix with local populations and feel more secure. UNHCR has worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, to implement a protection strategy for refugees in urban areas.

Refugee policy in Ecuador has been affected by negative perceptions of the displaced. The presence of refugees is often believed to lead to an increase in criminal activity and insecurity. Refugees also suffer from the perception that they are economic migrants who are abusing the asylum system.

At the end of 2010 the Government introduced admissibility procedures to control fraudulent asylum claims. In May 2012, the Government adopted Refugee Decree 1182, removing the broader refugee definition contained in the Cartagena Declaration and introducing restrictive admissibility procedures.



### ● The needs

Ecuador hosts a large refugee population, with more than 150,000 people having requested asylum in the country over the last decade. By the end of June 2012, some 55,791 asylum-seekers, 98 per cent of them from Colombia, had been recognized as refugees.

## Planning figures for Ecuador

TYPE OF POPULATION	ORIGIN	JAN 2013		DEC 2013	
		TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR
Refugees	Various	59,090	59,090	63,090	63,090
Persons in refugee-like situations	Various	70,340	17,590	72,340	18,090
Asylum-seekers	Various	35,560	35,560	49,560	49,560
<b>Total</b>		<b>164,990</b>	<b>112,240</b>	<b>184,990</b>	<b>130,740</b>

During the first six months of 2012 the flow of new arrivals (some 1,500 per month) continued. However, recognition rates have gone down. It is expected that on a yearly basis there will be some 18,000 additional asylum-seekers coming through the northern border.

The impact of the new Refugee Decree needs further consideration, as discussed during the recent visit to Ecuador of the High Commissioner. Particularly important is the monitoring of admissibility procedures, since many persons are in need of international protection, including those fleeing generalized violence.

UNHCR is defining new strategies to address the Refugee Decree's impact on asylum-seekers and recognized refugees, such as promoting other migratory solutions and creating more job opportunities. It is doing so in a context where the gap between legislation benefiting refugees and the actual application of these laws is growing. UNHCR will seek to promote comprehensive durable solutions for all people of concern. Local integration remains a solution for the majority of refugees, but there is a need to continue exploring resettlement and voluntary repatriation as alternatives.

## | Strategy and activities |

To address the evolving refugee protection environment in Ecuador, UNHCR will closely monitor the impact of Refugee Decree 1182. A strong field presence, particularly in border regions, will permit the monitoring of admissibility procedures to ensure that deserving asylum-seekers are protected. UNHCR will seek dialogue with the authorities to reduce protection gaps. It will support registration and renovation brigades aiming to reach isolated areas containing a large number of people in need of international protection. Training to improve the quality of decisions will be important.

UNHCR is redoubling efforts to prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and identify its victims. It will improve its response through collaboration with a wide range of partners, including through the use of safe-houses. Priority will be given to refugee and local youths, who will be provided with alternatives to unemployment and crime. Programmes implemented in coordination with local authorities will address the forced recruitment of youth in border areas.

UNHCR will also increase its efforts to ensure that asylum seekers and refugees have adequate access to rights, both to

asylum and basic services. A better balance between these two approaches is being sought.

UNHCR will finalize its comprehensive solutions strategy, providing refugees in Ecuador with opportunities to improve their situation. Additional efforts will be made to naturalize refugees who have been in Ecuador for more than three years. Priority will also be given to helping refugees access their right to work, both through employment schemes and support for livelihood options, including microfinancing.

Resettlement in a third country will remain the only option for a significant number of refugees. It is expected that the Ecuador operation will identify 1,600 people for resettlement, based on established criteria.

According to recent studies, interest in repatriation is low. More than 84 per cent of refugees do not want to return to Colombia under the present circumstances. Those individuals that opt for repatriation will receive UNHCR support.

### ● Constraints

The new protection context under Decree 1182 poses challenges for people in need of international protection, since access to asylum procedures has become more restrictive.

In border areas, UNHCR will operate in a complex security environment that directly affects the mobility of humanitarian workers. In other parts of the country too UNHCR offices will have to address an increasing number of security cases, particularly related to SGBV and resettlement.

## | Organization and implementation |

### ● Coordination

UNHCR has a wide range of partners in Ecuador. Its main government counterparts are the Refugee Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior. An important agreement has also been signed with the Ombudsman's Office. Coordination with civil society is being given priority: agreements have been signed with 15 NGOs, many of them national organizations.

Inter-agency coordination with WFP, IOM, UNICEF, UNDP, PAHO, UN Women, UNFPA and OHCHR will continue, particularly through joint activities in the north of the country.

## Main objectives and targets for 2013

### Favourable protection environment

- Relevant laws and policies are developed or strengthened.
- Government authorities responsible for refugee status determination (RSD) receive UNHCR support.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees obtain documentation.

### Security from violence and exploitation

- The risk of SGBV is reduced and the quality of the response to it is improved.

- The national network of shelters is expanded and adapted to improve assistance for SGBV victims.
- Legal assistance is available for all victims of SGBV.

### Durable solutions

- The potential for resettlement is realized.
- Approximately 1,600 people are referred for resettlement.
- Group resettlement is conducted under UNHCR criteria.

## UNHCR's presence in 2013

□ Number of offices	8
□ Total staff	89
International	13
National	47
JPOs	2
UNVs	22
Others	5



UNHCR and Oxfam staff visiting Colombian refugees in Ecuador to support their cacao-farming project.

### Financial information

Operations in Ecuador continue to receive the support of the international community. UNHCR will renew its efforts to secure the resources necessary to strengthen protection and implement livelihood projects in urban areas hosting refugees.

In 2013 UNHCR's funding needs in Ecuador are forecast at USD 21.1 million.

### Consequences of a funding shortfall

- UNHCR's capacity to support local integration and other solutions for refugees would be jeopardized.
- A reduction in the number of field offices would need to be considered.
- A reduction in the number of staff would be required.
- UNHCR's current level of interaction with and support to civil society partners would be diminished.

### UNHCR's budget in Ecuador 2008 – 2013



## 2013 UNHCR's budget in Ecuador (USD)

BUDGET BREAKDOWN	REFUGEE PROGRAMME PILLAR 1	TOTAL
<b>Favourable protection environment</b>		
International and regional instruments	119,781	119,781
Law and policy	415,943	415,943
Access to legal assistance and remedies	945,943	945,943
Access to territory and <i>non-refoulement</i>	242,543	242,543
Public attitude towards persons of concern	682,324	682,324
Subtotal	<b>2,406,534</b>	<b>2,406,534</b>
<b>Fair protection processes and documentation</b>		
Reception conditions improved	416,162	416,162
Registration and profiling	452,543	452,543
Refugee status determination	1,304,867	1,304,867
Individual documentation	456,162	456,162
Civil registration and civil status documentation	306,162	306,162
Subtotal	<b>2,935,895</b>	<b>2,935,895</b>
<b>Security from violence and exploitation</b>		
Protection from effects of armed conflict	944,324	944,324
Prevention and response to SGBV	1,286,029	1,286,029
Freedom of movement and reduction of detention risks	291,162	291,162
Protection of children	1,000,892	1,000,892
Subtotal	<b>3,522,406</b>	<b>3,522,406</b>
<b>Basic needs and essential services</b>		
Health	434,562	434,562
Reproductive health and HIV services	149,781	149,781
Water	219,781	219,781
Services for people with specific needs	1,647,324	1,647,324
Education	1,257,324	1,257,324
Subtotal	<b>3,708,772</b>	<b>3,708,772</b>
<b>Community empowerment and self-reliance</b>		
Community mobilization	577,324	577,324
Co-existence with local communities	816,162	816,162
Self-reliance and livelihoods	1,568,486	1,568,486
Subtotal	<b>2,961,972</b>	<b>2,961,972</b>
<b>Durable solutions</b>		
Comprehensive solutions strategy	326,162	326,162
Voluntary return	491,162	491,162
Integration	2,172,324	2,172,324
Resettlement	592,324	592,324
Subtotal	<b>3,581,972</b>	<b>3,581,972</b>
<b>Leadership, coordination and partnerships</b>		
Coordination and partnerships	726,162	726,162
Donor relations and resource mobilization	340,324	340,324
Subtotal	<b>1,066,486</b>	<b>1,066,486</b>
<b>Logistics and operations support</b>		
Operations management, coordination and support	888,705	888,705
Subtotal	<b>888,705</b>	<b>888,705</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,072,741</b>	<b>21,072,741</b>
<b>2012 Revised budget (as of 30 June 2012)</b>	<b>21,090,255</b>	<b>21,090,255</b>

## PARTNERS

### Implementing partners

#### Government agencies

Directorate for Refugees  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Interior  
Ministry of Justice  
Ombudsman's Office

#### NGOs

*Casa María Amor*  
*Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CDH)*  
*Consortio de Organizaciones no gubernamentales a favor de la Familia e Infancia Ecuatoriana (CONFIE)*  
*Fundación Ambiente y Sociedad (FAS)*  
*Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio (FEPP)*  
*Federación Artesanal Afro-Ecuatorianos Recolectores de Productos Bioacúaticos del Manglar (FEDARPOM)*  
*Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbios*  
*Fundación Nuestros Jóvenes*  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society  
Jesuit Refugee Service  
Labaka Foundation  
Oxfam  
Scalabrini Mission  
Tarabita Foundation  
Women to Women Corporation

### Operational partners

#### NGOs

Asylum Access  
*Pastoral Social*  
Refugee Education Trust  
Universidad PUCESE  
Universidad Vargas Torres

#### Others

IOM  
Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) / WHO  
OHCHR  
UNICEF  
UNDP  
UNFPA  
UN Women  
WFP