



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR Ecuador

Esmeraldas Field Office Factsheet

September 2021

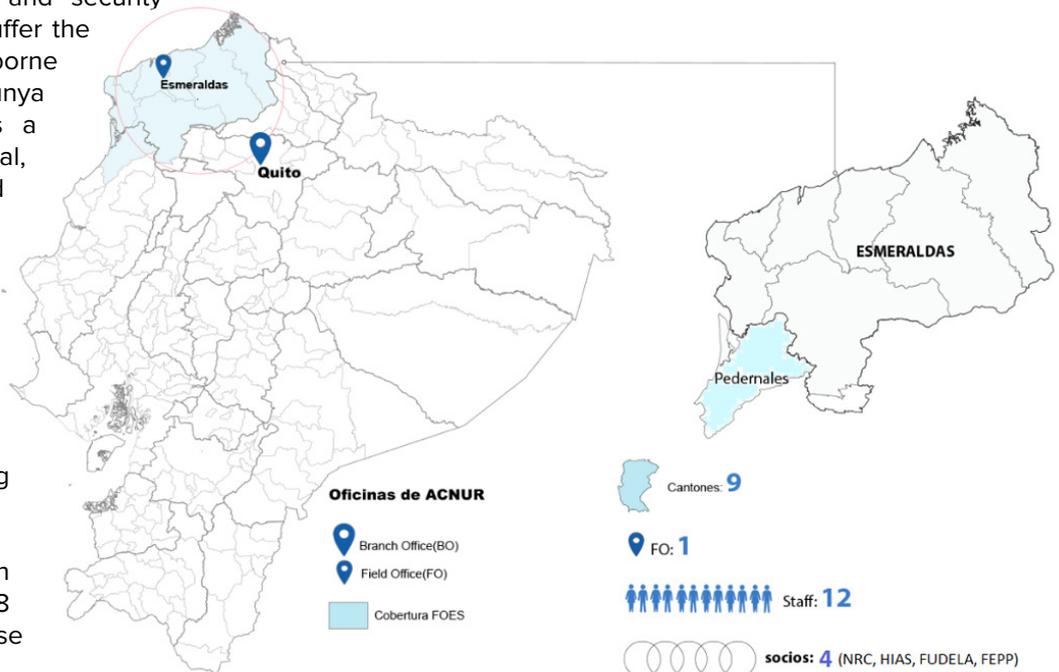


Operational context

Esmeraldas is a northern border province with Colombia in the Pacific zone and one of the main ports in Ecuador, being the terminal of the trans-Andean pipeline. According to official information (INEC, 2014), 76.2% of the province's population has unsatisfied basic needs and 37.3% is in situations of extreme poverty. 43.9% of the population identifies itself as Afro-Ecuadorian and there are a number of indigenous groups in the territory: the Awá, Chachi and Épera nationalities. The province suffers from entrenched economic and security challenges. Residents also suffer the highest rates of vector borne diseases such as chikungunya and dengue. Esmeraldas is a vulnerable Province to natural, anthropogenic, or combined events, because of its geographical location or physiographic, geological, tectonic and climatic characteristics. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 health emergency, PoCs have been severely affected by food insecurity and housing needs.

The UNHCR Field Office in Esmeraldas opened in 2008 in response to the increase

in Colombians seeking international protection due to the conflict in Colombia, especially in the departments of Nariño, Valle del Cauca and Cauca. UNHCR's work is focused on providing support to the authorities in their protection responses towards the refugee and asylum seeker population for their local integration, generation of sustainable livelihoods, creation of community protection networks and strengthening of public institutions, ensuring the effective exercise of the rights of the refugee population.



Key figures:

Recognized refugees in Esmeraldas province:

6,314 Colombians

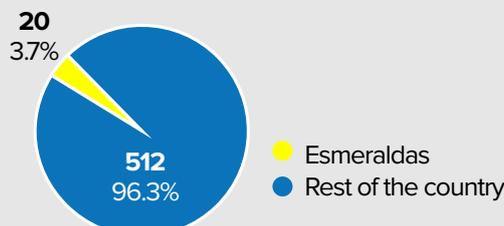
11 Venezuelans

PoCs registered by HIAS or UNHCR:

7,877 Colombians

7,966 Venezuelans

Between January and September 2021, **532** asylum applications of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing in Ecuador, of which **3.7 percent (20 cases)** were in Esmeraldas province.



In 2021, UNHCR and partners in Esmeraldas have provided assistance to:



13,000 refugees and migrants



15,000 people from the host community.

Work with partners

UNHCR works in Esmeraldas through agreements with four partners HIAS, FEPP, NRC and FUDELA. UNHCR also provides technical assistance to the Public Defender's office and maintains strategic alliances with Decentralized Autonomous Governments (GAD) of Esmeraldas, San Lorenzo, Quinindé, Atacames, Eloy Alfaro and Pedernales; as well as strategic organizations such as Lunita Lunera Foundation, Congregation of the Daughters of Charity, Ecuadorian Red Cross. UNHCR coordinates closely with agencies of the United Nations System present in the town, such as WFP, UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA, through the local inter-agency mechanism GTRM - EHL.

Key activities



Protection

- Protection monitoring in Esmeraldas, San Lorenzo (21 border communities) and in coastal areas such as Atacames, Borbón, Quinindé and Pedernales for the identification and reference of PoC.
- Case management, information, and orientation on access to the territory, access to asylum, access to services and humanitarian and public programs.
- Strengthening of institutional capacities (training and technical assistance), including actors of the local Protection System.
- Identification, prevention, and response to survivors of gender-based violence and unaccompanied or separated children.
- Assistance and coordination with the Civil Registry for the prevention of statelessness and access to birth certifications especially Afro-descendant, Chachi, Awá, and Épera children at the border.



Community Based Protection

- Technical assistance to Municipal GADs to strengthen community protection mechanisms such as Community Defenders
- Strengthening and accompaniment of 34 community protection networks focused on integration activities and mainstreaming of GBV risk mitigation.
- Rehabilitation of community infrastructures and strengthening of safe spaces.
- Digital inclusion and communication with digital communities, delivery of Wi-Fi points to GADS in strategic areas, delivery of analog radios in border areas.
- Support for community protection structures with a focus on livelihoods.
- Community epidemiological surveillance processes during the Covid-19 pandemic and support for PoC and host community access to vaccination.



Durable solutions

- Promotion of livelihoods and self-sufficiency programs with public institutions, local private actors and partners HIAS, FEPP and FUDELA in order to promote marketing spaces for entrepreneurs with Municipal GADs and MIES.
- Trainings on business management, financial education, and technical training in skills for self-employment or dependency relationship and business digitization.
- Access to financial services, bank account openings and loans
- Coordination of the resettlement program with IOM and third countries.
- Referral of students with special educational needs to the educational tracking brigades of the Ministry of Education for their permanence in the educational system and technical assistance for access to enrollment and change of educational units for refugees.



Coordination

- Articulation and co-leadership in the Emergency Operations Committees and the Provincial and Cantonal Human Mobility, Gender, Livelihoods, Child Protection, Health and HIV-AIDS roundtables.
- Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) in Esmeraldas, among others.