

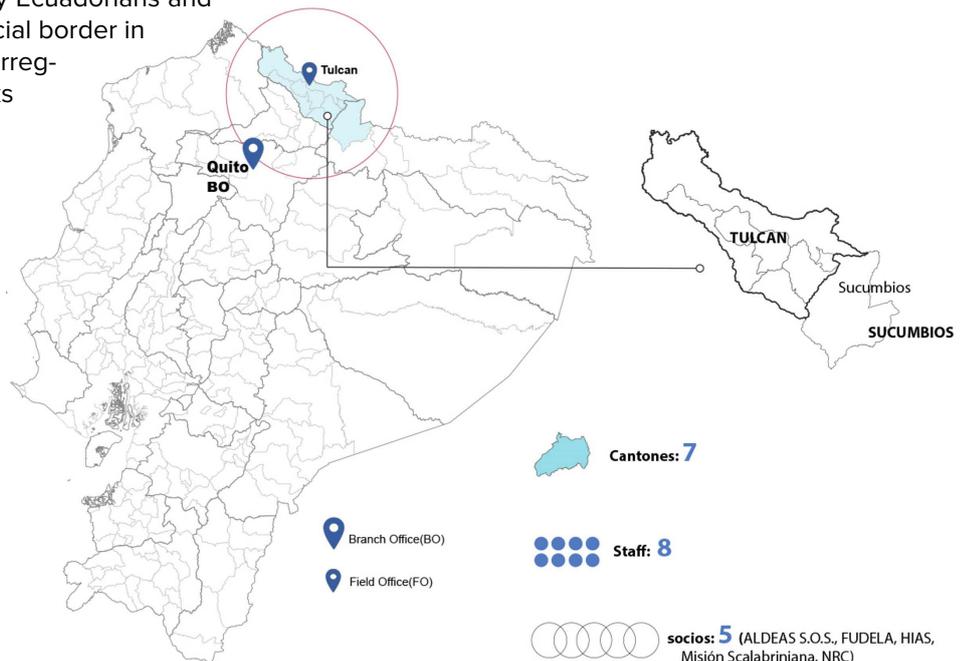


Operational context

UNHCR opened the Tulcan Field Office in 2010, covering Carchi Province and Sucumbios Canton of Sucumbios Province. Bordering the Colombian department of Nariño, on the northern border of Ecuador, the communities of Carchi have a long tradition of welcoming refugees and asylum-seekers. Tulcan also has the Rumichaca Bridge, one of the main official entry points into Ecuador from Colombia. The border is very porous, with dozens of irregular paths crossing the border. Venezuelans have used the paths since 2019 with the introduction of barriers to access territory. The paths also have been used by Ecuadorians and Colombians since the closure of the official border in March 2020 due to the pandemic. The irregular paths present serious protection risks and are controlled by armed gangs. The paths are difficult to monitor and make it difficult for the population to access information, services and exercise their rights. As well, there are no health checks along the paths.

Since April 2021, there has been an increase in arrivals of Colombians seeking asylum in Ecuador, as well as third-country nationals (i.e. Haitians, Congolese) transiting through Tulcan into Colombia in an attempt to reach the USA. Most refugees, asylum-seekers and people of concern will pass through Tulcan at some point in their journey entering or exiting Ecuador.

While a significant number of UNHCR's persons of concern continue onward to other parts of Ecuador or third countries, some are seeking to return to Venezuela due to the loss of livelihoods and housing due to COVID-19, yet others choose to remain in the area to work in agriculture or other income-generating activities. UNHCR continues to work on improving reception conditions, access to humanitarian assistance, local integration, as well as ensuring security and health in the context of COVID-19.



Key figures:

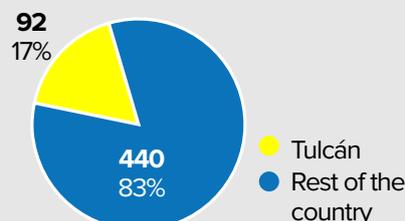
Recognized refugees in Carchi province:

4,194 Colombians
58 Venezuelans

PoCs registered by HIAS or UNHCR:

3,291 Colombians
14,387 Venezuelans

Between January and September 2021, **532** asylum applications of Venezuelans and Colombians were admitted for processing in Ecuador, of which **17 percent** (92 cases) were in Carchi province.



In 2021, UNHCR and its partners have delivered:

1,930 hygiene kits

2,172 walking kits

1,328 cash transfers

Work with partners

UNHCR in Tulcan develops protection programs and durable solutions directly and through its implementing partners in accordance with the Multi-Year Strategy of the Operation in Ecuador, UNHCR's Protection Priorities at the global level and the Regional Response Platform for the Venezuelan population, which it co-leads with IOM.

UNHCR works with five partners: HIAS, FUDELA, SOS Children's Villages, NRC, and Mision Scalabriniana. It also provides technical and capacity-building support to the Ombudsman's Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Directorate of International Protection and Cantonal Boards for the Protection of Rights. Each activity has been adapted to the context of the pandemic to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to the UNHCR team, partners, beneficiaries, and host communities.

Key activities



Protection

- Advocacy with government entities and the private sector for access to services, local integration and exercise of human rights, prevention of evictions and social inclusion in response to the pandemic.
- Coordination with the Ministry of Public Health, municipal and parish governments for the vaccination campaign, installation of refugee housing units (RHU) for triage, and delivery of biosecurity items to shelters in response to the health emergency.
- Protection monitoring of arrivals and departures between Ecuador and Colombia, including persons affected by the pandemic.
- Case management/provision of protection information and guidance on access to asylum, migration alternatives, access to services and humanitarian assistance programs, in the context of the health emergency.
- Prevention and response to survivors of gender-based violence, and provision of a comprehensive response for unaccompanied children and adolescents.
- Strengthening the refugee status determination process with authorities.
- Capacity-building and technical support for legal advice and representation of refugees and asylum-seekers through the Ombudsman's Office and the Public Defender's Office of Ecuador and the Cantonal Systems for the Protection of Rights (SCPD).
- Support for the Temporary Shelter Purik Huasi, distribution of NFI kits (hygiene, clothing, caminante, biosecurity), and protection information.



Livelihoods

- Coordination with municipal and provincial authorities for livelihood activities, and training in rural and urban sectors and improved local integration.
- Awareness-raising events with private actors and host communities for labor recruitment.
- Implementation of livelihood and socioeconomic inclusion projects with the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion targeting vulnerable people in Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, including youth.
- Support to academic institutions in technical vocational training and entrepreneurship innovation processes, with emphasis on agricultural skills and products.



Durable solutions

- Fight against xenophobia and discrimination, together with civil society organizations and public institutions, through information campaigns to promote solidarity and coexistence.
- To reduce communication gaps caused by COVID-19, UNHCR and its partners support the population with connectivity solutions for improved access to services and information.
- Improving both access to education and integration, and supporting the initiatives of the Ministry of Education, through the "We Breathe Inclusion" methodology.



Coordination

- Co-leader with IOM in the Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM).
- Support to the Human Mobility Roundtable of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility.
- Binational coordination with counterparts of the United Nations system (Ecuador-Colombia).