

Annual Results Report

2023

Ecuador

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- 4.1 - Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Section 1: Context and Overview

1.1 Changes to the Operational Context

Ecuador faced a worsening security situation due to organized crime groups dedicated to drug, arms, and human trafficking. In November 2023, newly-elected President Daniel Noboa took office vowing to address the economy, corruption and violence. Insecurity impacted communities where UNHCR works, and host communities became less receptive to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants.

These dynamics fueled departures of refugees and migrants and of Ecuadorians. Venezuelans continued to represent the largest population movements in the country, with some 300,000 arrivals and 300,000 departures in 2023. Ecuadorians were the second largest population crossing Panama's Darien, increasing from 29,000 in 2022 to 57,000 in 2023. Meanwhile, Colombian arrivals to Ecuador reached 5,244 in 2023, a 23% increase from 2022, due to ongoing conflict in border regions. In this context, UNHCR adapted to operational barriers, worked with partners to assist people in need, and employed community-based strategies to promote protection for people in human mobility and local residents.

The Government of Ecuador continued implementing a registration and regularization process for Venezuelans, Colombians, and other nationalities, and registered over 259,000 people by end-2023 with the technical and financial support of UNHCR and IOM.

In October 2023, with funding from the US Government and an agreement with the Ecuadorian Government, UNHCR and IOM implemented the Safe Mobility Offices to expand resettlement and other legal pathways to the United States.

Although violence did not directly target UN staff, insecurity caused the UN system at times to adopt virtual work modalities and reinforce security measures.

Violence also limited refugees' and migrants' access to services and livelihoods. UNHCR kept the population informed of the security situation and reinforced communication with communities' messages.

UNHCR and partners also reinforced border monitoring, in view of new border control measures adopted by the Government, to ensure protection and respect of rights.

1.2. Progress Against the Desired Impact

1. Impact Area: Attaining Favorable Protection Environments

People UNHCR serves receive protection according to international standards and in line with their rights and specific needs.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%

In 2023, UNHCR and partners registered over 60,000 forcibly displaced and stateless people, 70% of whom have unmet basic needs, severe medical conditions or lack legal status or access to education, down from 75% in 2022. Nearly 70% of those assisted were Venezuelan, while 20% were Colombian.

UNHCR collaborated with asylum authorities to implement the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI), enhancing reception arrangements and civil registration. UNHCR supported the Directorate for International Protection (DPIN) to register 10,740 individuals with protection needs, including 3,800 recognized refugees, reducing the asylum backlog to 8,290 cases (from 12,800 in 2022). Refugee recognition rates rose to 67.5% (from 64% in 2022) and processing times were cut to five months.

Lack of documentation and irregular status posed significant barriers to protection and integration. The Government, with UNHCR and IOM support, continued its registration and regularization exercise, registering foreign nationals and providing temporary residence visas (VIRTE). By end-2023, the Government had registered 259,000 individuals, issued 201,000 migratory certificates and 87,970 temporary residence visas.

UNHCR provided comprehensive services (including legal orientation, psychosocial care, and shelter) to 1,207 gender-based violence (GBV) survivors. Collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Human Rights strengthened protection services under the Organic Law on Violence against Women.

For child protection, UNHCR supported regularization for unaccompanied and separated children, resulting in 736 visas and 567 identity cards issued. UNHCR advocated with the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion to prioritize this population and supported the Ministry with 22 UNVs to strengthen identification and referrals. The case management system assisted 1,121 unaccompanied and separated children in 2023.

2. Impact Area: Realizing Rights in Safe Environments

Most vulnerable people UNHCR serves are able to cover their basic needs and access rights, including health and education.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11.52%	16.55%
2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73.14%	79.71%

In 2023, because of UNHCR efforts and coordination with the authorities, 80% of the displaced population surveyed had access to health services, and 78% of school-aged children were enrolled in primary

education. UNHCR provided cash assistance to 3,181 (11,521 individuals) vulnerable households to help cover basic needs and articulated with the authorities to guarantee timely access to health and education, and 83% of households supported registered general improvement in their living conditions.

Nevertheless, according to post-distribution monitoring, 97% of supported households still used negative coping mechanisms, such as skipping rental payments (65%) or selling productive assets (37%), mostly because the amounts received were insufficient to cover all of the household's basic needs. The gap between the assistance provided and the cost of living was mitigated through coordination between UNHCR and the World Food Programme under the UN Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) through the provision of food vouchers, even though unmet needs still represented a challenge.

Access to health services and the education system for people forcibly displaced continues to be lower than that of the national population. Efforts have been maintained with ministries to improve the situation, but despite significant coverage, it is still lower. Access is limited due to discrimination and xenophobia, economic barriers due to costs of some services, and growing insecurity and violence.

For refugee children and adolescents and the host population, access to education was restricted in 2023 due to forced recruitment attempts by organized criminal groups in school spaces. Only 43% of children in human mobility were enrolled in the education system. (Source: Ministry of Education, INEC and GTRM data).

In the case of health, despite a significant measles vaccination coverage rate (79% of displaced children aged 9 months to 5 years) (source: RMS) this was 2 points lower than in 2021 and lower than the average for Ecuadorian children.

4. Impact Area: Securing Solutions

People UNHCR serves achieve self-reliance and progressively find durable solutions in resilient and cohesive communities.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
4.1 Number of refugees who voluntarily return in safety and dignity to their country of origin	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Unknown	0
4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	723	1,427
4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	69,884	70,649

In 2023, UNHCR focused on durable solutions, emphasizing social and economic inclusion and resettlement or complementary pathways.

A total of 2,962 refugees, mainly from Colombia and Venezuela, were submitted for resettlement to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with 1427 resettled. The Safe Mobility Offices Initiative (SMO) facilitated the resettlement of 1,138 people to the U.S. and 50 candidates were identified for the Canadian Labour Mobility Programme.

Improvements in registration and documentation increased the working-age population's access to decent work by eight points, from 16% in 2022 to 24% in 2023. Despite security challenges, UNHCR supported economic inclusion for 6,611 individuals, providing 2,021 with entrepreneurship support and 3,847 with assistance to access formal employment. Partnerships with 543 private and public allies promoted inclusive business models under the Companies with Refugees Initiative.

Community interventions aimed at integration and social cohesion identified and addressed issues like insecurity and violence, particularly in Guayaquil, Esmeraldas, El Oro, and Quito. Collaborating with 12 grassroots organizations, UNHCR mitigated these challenges through humanitarian access methodologies. The localization strategy enhanced communication and feedback mechanisms with over 750,000 research sessions, enabling them to voice their integration challenges. Sport for Protection activities were adjusted

based on participatory assessments to foster safe spaces for social cohesion.

The initiative "Un Mundo Posible" brought together sports, the private sector, media, and influencers to support community cohesion, reaching over 700,000 through events and 800,000 on social media. UNHCR's broader information campaigns reached over 1.7 million people to promote peaceful coexistence.

Other Core Impact Indicators

Country	Indicator	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Actual (2023)
Ecuador	3.1 Proportion of people who have the right to decent work	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	18.17%	23.61%
Ecuador	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in primary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	83.06%	78.42%
Ecuador	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	55.14%	48.95%
Ecuador	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	29.45%	34.47%

1.3 Challenges to Achieving Impacts

In 2023, the political, economic, and security situation posed challenges to the delivery of effective protection and integration of refugees, asylum-seekers, and vulnerable migrants in Ecuador.

The Government of Ecuador had limited resources to respond to growing insecurity and violence from organized criminal gangs and/or to address preparedness and response needs related to climate emergencies and natural disasters (including flooding and earthquakes). This affected protection and services for host communities, refugees, and migrants, especially the most vulnerable. UNHCR collaborated with the authorities and provided technical and financial support to promote access to rights for refugees and migrants.

There were increased arrivals of Colombians (23% more in 2023 than in 2022) seeking international protection after fleeing violence from the Pacific Coast (Buenaventura), Caquetá, Nariño and border areas with Ecuador. There were also changes in the directionality of mixed movements of Venezuelans, with more entries to Ecuador from Peru of those in transit north than departures south for the first time by mid-2023, and more annual exits north from Ecuador to Colombia than entries, a shift from 2022 and prior years when there were more annual entries to Ecuador from Colombia than exits. There was also growing internal displacement and departures from the country: in 2023, Ecuadorians were the second largest nationality crossing the Darien in Panama, motivated by insecurity as well as lack of economic opportunities.

Changes in the national and local authorities in 2023 resulted in the need for UNHCR to adapt its strategies and interventions, including focusing on capacity-building, and developing multiple contingency plans in a changing context.

1.4 Collaboration and Partnerships

UNHCR worked with national ministries to promote displaced peoples' access to services and enjoyment of fundamental rights, including the Ministry of External Relations and Human Mobility, the Secretary of Risk Management, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. UNHCR also worked with local authorities, including the Autonomous Decentralized Governments to strengthen their capacities and coordinate efforts to promote local integration and peaceful coexistence.

UNHCR played a crucial role in inter-agency coordination mechanisms for the response for refugees and migrants, including as co-lead with IOM of the National Inter-agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V – GTRM for its acronym in Spanish) which in 2023 expanded to include 71 partner organizations in Ecuador. The GTRM coordinated the national annual inter-agency Joint Needs Assessment, the planning process for the 2024 update to the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan, the operational response of R4V partners in Ecuador and regularly monitored population movements through its Border Monitoring and Population Profiling Tool. UNHCR also participated as an active member of the UN Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team.

UNHCR strengthened its collaboration with development actors such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the International Monetary Fund to promote the inclusion of individuals under its mandate in government projects. As a result, and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, UNHCR made significant progress in including refugees and asylum-seekers in housing projects of the Ministry with the IADB. Additionally, the operation worked together with 19 partners throughout Ecuador, carrying out a wide range of projects to support displaced people.

Section 2: Results

2.1. Outcomes and Achievements

1. Outcome Area: Access to Territory, Reg. and Documentation

People with and for whom UNHCR works are timely identified and referred to protection services.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.51%	100.00%	100.00%
1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	97.52%	98.30%	98.53%
1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	92.11%	100.00%	100.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, Ecuador maintained an open border policy for asylum-seekers and refugees and generally complied with protection standards at entry points. UNHCR worked with government institutions to improve international protection delivery and promote sustainability. By providing technical and financial support, UNHCR ensured forcibly displaced people had access to registration, documentation, legal services, and refugee status determination. During 2023, almost 60,000 individuals were registered by UNHCR and provided access to services and assistance, compared to 2022, when over 104,000 were registered (the decrease was mainly due to a 30% reduction in new arrivals of Venezuelans to Ecuador in 2022 compared to 2023).

UNHCR worked closely with the asylum authorities to implement the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) to develop adequate reception arrangements, including inter-institutional protocols to identify and refer forcibly displaced people at entry and border points; strengthen civil registration initiatives; and identify and remedy rights violations. A very low number of protection incidents related to arrivals at airports were reported, but in all instances when the individual manifested a need for asylum, authorities guaranteed access to the territory. No refoulement incidents were identified.

UNHCR supported the work of institutions mandated to provide protection and specialized services (case management, protection, and alternative care) for people with specific protection needs, gender-based violence survivors and children at risk. This support enabled individuals to exercise their rights and access services.

Access to registration and documentation (for asylum-seekers and refugees) was guaranteed, duly established in law, and, in general terms, accessible in practice. Some practical challenges remained for people in remote or border locations, who lacked internet connectivity, or needed access to information on their rights or ways to access alternative protection pathways.

2. Outcome Area: Status Determination

People with and for whom UNHCR works have access to fair and efficient refugee status determination procedures.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	361.00	180.00	312.00
2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

During 2023, the Government of Ecuador registered 10,740 people with potential international protection needs (a slight increase compared to 2022), recognized 3,800 individuals as refugees (over 10% more than the past year) and reduced the backlog of pending cases to 8,290 people (a 20% reduction from 2022). Similarly, among asylum-seekers, Colombian registrations increased continuously since 2021, with 5,244 applications in 2023, while Venezuelan applications continued to decrease, with 4,851 new asylum applications in 2023. Refugee recognition rates rose, achieving an overall of 67.5% for all nationalities, fueled mainly by the high recognition rate for the Colombian caseload. At the same time, the number of Venezuelans recognized as refugees presented a slight decrease compared to 2022, at 24% of all applications, in line with the reduction of registrations from that nationality.

Very positively, the average processing time for protection cases was significantly reduced from previous years, to about five months from registration to first instance decision. In addition, UNHCR supported an initiative to improve and update government records systems, clarify the current number of asylum-seekers still awaiting decisions and close other inactive cases within the refugee status determination process.

UNHCR provided the Directorate for International Protection (DPIN) with on-site support to offices with processing needs (such as Guayaquil and Lago Agrio) and reinforced support to deploy mobile registration and eligibility brigades. In total, nine brigades were carried out (Esmeraldas, Lago Agrio, Machala, Santo Domingo, and San Lorenzo) registering 3,469 beneficiaries, a significant increase from approximately 2,100 such registrations last year, out of which DPIN carried out 572 eligibility interviews. UNHCR partners including NRC and HIAS provided additional support and assistance to complement the brigades, particularly through legal and documentation services.

UNHCR facilitated several operational field visits by DPIN central authorities to their field units, to carry out capacity-building activities. For the second year in a row, UNHCR also conducted two protection seminars for DPIN staff, bringing together field and central-level colleagues.

UNHCR also consolidated its role (voice but no vote) in the periodic meetings of the Asylum Eligibility Commission.

4. Outcome Area: Gender-based Violence

Survivors of gender-based violence have access to specialized protection responses in a safe environment.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	74.96%	75.00%	75.37%
4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	80.52%	82.00%	84.85%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR provided safe spaces for 3,861 refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community GBV survivors and managed 1,207 gender-based violence cases. UNHCR assisted 10,739 people through specialized services (legal orientation, psychosocial care, and protection shelters) which ensured a survivor-centered approach as the primary basis for case management. Eighty-five percent of people supported by UNHCR reported satisfaction with the case management process. In addition, the operation adjusted tools for gender-based violence case management to harmonize the prioritization of profiles and the registration and referral processes.

Community participation and inter-institutional coordination were crucial to raising awareness of the importance of gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation, and response. UNHCR built the capacities of 2,224 public institutions staff and social services organizations on essential elements of gender-based violence, safe disclosure, protection risks for forcibly displaced women and girls, and protection mechanisms, among other topics. Participants included personnel from the Ministry of Women and Human Rights, the Ministry of Defense, the Armed Forces, the National Police, Rights Protection Boards and members of the rights protection system, local networks, and inter-agency working groups such as the Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) and the International Cooperation Gender Working Group (MEGECI).

According to the 2023 Results Monitoring Survey, 75% of respondents reported knowing about available gender-based violence response services, which demonstrated the effectiveness of information dissemination and awareness-raising campaigns for refugees, people in human mobility, and the host community.

Over 3,400 individuals participated in workshops on gender-based violence prevention, protection measures for survivors, referrals to services, and digital gender-based violence, among others, contributing to strengthening peer groups, community organizations, and women-led organizations. In addition, UNHCR created resources for communicating with communities to disseminate relevant messages on gender-based violence and develop documents such as the “Our Right to Security” Assessment and the “Report on the situation of gender-based violence in Ecuador.”

Furthermore, UNHCR renewed a Memorandum of Understanding (2023 – 2025) with the Ministry of Women and Human Rights (the lead agency for gender-based violence prevention and response) to cooperate on training, technical assistance, and strengthening of services. This agreement included support for “Purple Centres” (Centros Violeta) and Comprehensive Protection Services, the generation of technical tools, and implementing human rights commemorative events.

5. Outcome Area: Child Protection

Unaccompanied, separated or at-risk children and adolescents that UNHCR works with have access to efficient protection responses

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	58.39%	72.00%	55.41%
5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4.64%	4.00%	18.53%
5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	25.09%	37.00%	27.26%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

UNHCR enhanced and strengthened its case management for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and children at risk, including by defining vulnerability profiles based on the characteristics of the children. Partners involved in child protection responses implemented these updated guidelines. Through these interventions, UNHCR and its partners reached 55% of identified unaccompanied and separated children at risk with best interests procedures. UNHCR and its partners also managed 1,121 child protection cases in 2023.

In 2023, the Government initiated a migratory regularization process for foreigners (especially Venezuelan nationals) which included the possibility of regularization of unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR played a leading role in supporting these regularization efforts for children in partnership with IOM and UNICEF, and provided technical assistance to support the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) in the development of a procedure that, through the Best Interests Assessment, certified the condition of unaccompanied or separated children, re-established family ties of children and adolescents, and recommended their regularization to the Migration, Foreign Ministry and Civil Registry authorities. The Government granted 736 visas to unaccompanied and separated children, 567 of whom were also issued identity cards. Within this framework, UNHCR trained 930 people from public institutions and civil society organizations on the regularization process for unaccompanied and separated children and the Protocol for the Comprehensive Care of Children and Adolescents in Human Mobility.

In the growing climate of insecurity and escalating violence within the country, children and adolescents – both those in human mobility and those living in host communities – faced increasing risks of forced recruitment by organized criminal groups, and their involvement in community engagement processes emerged as pivotal for their protection and resilience. UNHCR took steps to enhance adolescents' integration into community-based protection initiatives, yielding a notable 19% participation rate in activities spanning sports, arts, and other extracurricular pursuits.

6. Outcome Area: Safety and Access to Justice

People with and for whom UNHCR works have access to the justice system, legal services and state protection mechanisms.

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Ecuador has a solid legal framework for protecting the people with and for whom UNHCR works and a long-standing asylum tradition. The country has recognized asylum and other protection principles (such as non-refoulement, non-discrimination, access to documentation and rights, among others) at the constitutional level, and has established specific legislation (LOMH 2021 and its Regulation) on Asylum and Statelessness. The country is also party to all main human rights instruments at the global and regional levels, providing complementarity in international protection to those in need. The 1951 Refugee Convention and the Cartagena refugee definitions are set in law and applied in practice. National legislation

provides refugee status and stateless determination procedures consistent with international standards.

In 2023, in addition to carrying out the Quality Assurance Initiative (QAI) through robust collaboration with the Directorate for International Protection (DPIN), UNHCR strengthened working relations with other relevant justice system actors, including the National Assembly and the Judiciary Council, as well as with human rights institutions that have constitutional oversight of administrative decisions, such as the Public Defender's Office and the Ombudsperson's Office. These collaborations helped to preclude potential challenges in legislation and protection frameworks, by anticipating issues of concern and addressing them through informal means.

In terms of the operational response to displaced people in need of legal services, UNHCR strengthened its programme with the Public Defender's Office, through their interventions in human mobility cases. Through this collaboration, in 2023, 11,951 displaced people accessed legal services and representation (a slight reduction of some 600 fewer than in 2022). Of these, 8,428 people in a situation of human mobility received direct legal representation and 3,523 other forms of legal counsel. Most interventions supported refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants with accessing regularization options, documentation, and appeals through the asylum system.

During 2023, UNHCR was involved in drafting and/or providing comments on several pieces of legislation, including the reform of the Human Mobility Law (Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana) and the protocols for access to international protection at airports and other entry points.

7. Outcome Area: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment

Host communities and forcibly displaced people develop strategies to mitigate violence and insecurity risks.

Inclusive community-based networks are strengthened to mitigate protection, security and environmental risks and facilitate social cohesion

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
7.2 Proportion of people who have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0.00%	50.00%	6.50%
7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	73.50%	55.00%	55.76%
7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Moderate: 40-69 points	Extensive: ≥ 70 points	Moderate: 40-69 points

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR carried out interventions in communities in 11 provinces of Ecuador, despite access challenges due to violence and insecurity caused by organized crime groups. More than 13,000 (a little more than what was achieved in 2022, whose figure is 12,738) forcibly displaced people and host community members meaningfully participated in programmes to consolidate social cohesion and promote peaceful coexistence, equality, and non-discrimination.

In the geographic areas most affected by violence and organized crime groups, UNHCR developed periodic monitoring of humanitarian access conditions and prioritized support to community-based organizations through localization. UNHCR provided support to 348 community-based organizations, including refugee-led and women-led organizations, to expand their coverage and reach people with greater protection risks in hard-to-access areas. UNHCR registered 56% female participants in leadership and decision-making

structures.

Moreover, the operation actively promoted the engagement of women leaders in various national, regional, and global platforms, showcasing the endeavors of at least 16 women-led organizations. These efforts not only amplified the voices of women but also fostered their active participation in critical discussions and decision-making processes on humanitarian action.

UNHCR carried out participatory assessments with multiple profiles of people in human mobility, to gather information on living conditions, opportunities, challenges, and protection needs in the context of growing insecurity, applying an age, gender, and diversity approach. A total of 851 people participated in these consultative processes, of whom 563 were women and girls, and 115 were Afro-descendants, LGBTIQ+ people, and of other diverse backgrounds. The results contributed to findings on the impact of violence and insecurity on the lives of forcibly displaced people and their host communities. Meanwhile, in 2023 UNHCR Ecuador reached the 65 or moderate level of the three levels (extensive, moderate and limited) in terms of the extent of participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people across all programme phases.

UNHCR also strengthened feedback mechanisms, thanks to the participation of refugees, migrants and host communities in the participatory validation processes. The number of visits to the help.unhcr.org platform increased by 167% compared to 2022, registering 784,121 visits in 2023, and the chatbot reached 15,622 people through information research sessions. UNHCR and partners established other mechanisms to receive suggestions and complaints related to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and the quality of services, including a complaint hotline, an email mailbox, physical complaint and suggestion boxes in offices, mobile boxes, confidential prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse complaint forms, and safe physical spaces for direct attention dedicated to receiving feedback from persons receiving assistance from UNHCR and partners.

8. Outcome Area: Well-Being and Basic Needs

The emergency response to forcibly displaced persons is relevant and efficient, including climate change actions, and mitigation of violence and insecurity risks

The most vulnerable families UNHCR works with improve access to basic needs and relevant services.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	4.39%	4.00%	4.16%
8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.74%	99.40%	98.57%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR provided cash assistance to cover basic needs for the most vulnerable individuals and households. Meeting basic needs represented a significant challenge for refugees and host communities, with the cost of living calculated by the national authorities at \$786 per month for nationals and \$853 for refugees (which is greater than that for nationals given that foreigners are unable to access some social support networks that help minimize costs, for example, for health services), according to estimates by UNHCR as part of the National Cash Working Group within the R4V Platform (GTRM). This resulted in an alarming gap between the costs of covering monthly basic expenses and the average working income (with the national minimum wage set at \$450). Displaced people face even greater challenges, considering the limited opportunities for decent work due to lack of documentation and increasing xenophobia. The deteriorating situation of violence and insecurity has also increased the need for temporary accommodation, making it more challenging to settle and find a livelihood to cover basic needs.

In this context, providing cash assistance to vulnerable displaced people was a vital component of the protection response, with 83% of households who received assistance indicating that their living conditions improved significantly or moderately, and 76% reporting significantly or moderately reduced feelings of

stress.

In this context, 55% of new cases registered in 2023 had access to assistance, either cash or in-kind. Nationwide, UNHCR provided cash assistance to 3,181 households (11,521 individuals) through a gender-based approach (94% of the recipients were women) using prepaid bank cards. According to the UNHCR post-distribution monitoring (PDM) conducted in 2023, 52% of recipient households could meet at least half of their needs. Most of the assistance was spent on rent (81%) and food (70%). Payment of rent and food were also the basic needs the families considered not entirely met (rent in 81% of cases and food in 72% of cases).

To mitigate shelter needs and related protection risks, UNHCR provided temporary accommodations to 13,705 refugees and 208 people from host communities through 10 shelters nationwide. If compared to 2022, 4,993 fewer people received accommodation services during 2023, due to the discontinuation of support for one shelter, however, shelter provision was complemented in Huaquillas and Ibarra by supporting two community kitchens benefiting 9,821 people. UNHCR also provided 36,518 kits to meet essential personal care needs, including female and male hygiene kits, baby hygiene kits, and "caminante" kits, either to people during their stay at a shelter or while they were in transit.

To strengthen multiple actors' shelter delivery responses and capacity, UNCHR trained 410 technical staff in shelter management and improved and equipped 38 municipal and faith-based organizations with temporary accommodation spaces. UNHCR also aligned these training activities and infrastructure improvements with the preparatory actions for El Niño.

10. Outcome Area: Healthy Lives

People with and for whom UNHCR works improve their access to primary health care services, and especially to maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health and mental health and psychosocial support.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	81.34%	81.00%	79.17%
10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	98.04%	97.50%	96.97%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

During 2023, UNHCR's support to primary health care services reached 17 health units in territories with a significant presence of forcibly displaced people (including Ambato, Ibarra, Santo Domingo, San Lorenzo, Eloy Alfaro and Atacames). Forms of support included the delivery of equipment for first-line care. In addition, UNHCR improved the Augusto Egas Health Center infrastructure in Santo Domingo with support from the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) was another central element in health interventions. UNHCR developed a community-based psychosocial support strategy using scalable psychological interventions such as the Management Problem Plus (PM+) with community mental health promoters and provided referrals to professional psychosocial support services through specialized partners. UNHCR and partners carried out 9,928 mental health and psychosocial support consultations.

This strategy for mental health support was also linked to the education process, providing psychosocial support for 337 children, and support for 2,950 teachers from a self-care perspective. Individuals in need could also request and receive group and individual psychosocial support from UNHCR and partners.

In terms of prevention and response to HIV, UNHCR and partners' interventions applied a sexual and reproductive health approach, targeting key populations at risk, including sex workers, young people,

adolescents, and LGBTIQ+ people, strengthening their knowledge and capacities for HIV prevention. A total of 432 people received training through this process. In the city of Machala, on the southern border, youth promoters and individuals engaged in sex work, including refugees, migrants, members of host communities, and the LGBTIQ+ population, were provided with the knowledge to raise awareness and promote healthy practices in their communities. A peer-to-peer methodology was used, with a cascade approach that started with training promoters who then carried out training or direct approaches with their peers and communities. Along the northern border, UNHCR collaborated with a local association of individuals involved in sex work (Association September 21st) to provide training on HIV prevention and health rights for 526 people in Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura, and Sucumbíos. The collaboration with the local association facilitated outreach to women who do not normally attend health centres. It also helped to identify the significant barriers that refugees, migrants, and transgender individuals performing sex work in public spaces face to accessing sexual and reproductive health services and protection.

11. Outcome Area: Education

Children and adolescents that UNHCR works with have improved access to, stay in school, and completion of primary and secondary education in a safe and inclusive environment.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	72.01%	72.00%	65.11%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In 2023, UNHCR implemented, for the third year, the multi-year resilience programme (MYRP) to improve access to education for displaced children and youth. Several processes in this framework were strengthened and consolidated, including the development of mechanisms for the implementation of agreement 26A (now included in the regulations of the education law) that guarantees access to the education system for children in vulnerable situations, including children in human mobility. The operation also developed and implemented a community-based model for educational inclusion, based on proactively identifying children outside the education system, as well as identifying the causes for exclusion from education and supporting their inclusion through the delivery of Cash for Education (C4E), educational kits, psycho-pedagogical and psychosocial support, identification of specific protection needs, referral to the services of the National Child Protection System, and prevention of teenage pregnancy. In this framework, 320 households received cash transfers, benefiting 1,235 people, and 3,626 children benefited from educational kits (school materials).

Meanwhile, UNHCR and partners supported teachers through interventions with educational institutions and strengthened their capacities through training processes on mental health with a focus on self-care and stress management, psychosocial support groups of discharge and peer support, and individual psychosocial support for those who requested it. Through these activities, UNHCR reached 2,950 teachers with assistance.

Finally, the Respiramos Inclusión (We Breathe Inclusion) process, a methodological tool to address xenophobia and discrimination in education, reached 3,376 teachers in 152 educational institutions, receiving training and practical tools to address discrimination in the classroom, as well as in the educational environment. UNHCR worked with the authorities and partners to update this methodology to the current challenges of insecurity and violence affecting schools. The adaptation involved incorporating new tools for deployment in schools and strengthening the capacities of the educational community to develop their protection mechanisms. Playful pedagogical tools were developed to support reflection for self-care and to strengthen healthy relationships among teachers, children, adolescents, and adults. In this way, protection mechanisms are ways that the educational community generates to preserve the emotional, physical and social well-being of children and adolescents. Among the protection mechanisms we have the strengthening of bonds between children and adolescents with their peers and adults; the identification, prevention, and response to situations of violence and, if necessary, referrals to the system of protection of rights; prevention of risk behaviors and conflict resolution.

13. Outcome Area: Self Reliance, Economic Inclusion and Livelihoods

People with and for whom UNHCR works improve their ability to generate income in conditions of safety and dignity and are integrated into local socioeconomic networks.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	14.08%	25.00%	29.26%
13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	11.21%	11.00%	4.43%
13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	12.72%	13.00%	10.85%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Despite Ecuador's security and economic challenges, in 2023, UNHCR facilitated economic inclusion for 6,611 forcibly displaced people in 29 localities.

During 2023 the proportion of refugees who were unemployed decreased from 13% in 2022 to 11%. UNHCR provided 2,021 displaced people with business training and entrepreneurship services, and distributed seed capital to 188 entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. Through the initiative Buy with Purpose, UNHCR facilitated access to local markets for 120 refugee and migrant entrepreneurs. Support to formalize businesses was a key strategy to connect registration and documentation efforts with integration. UNHCR supported 30 new businesses to obtain health licenses to operate, and 57 productive associations. Employment counseling was provided to 1,582 people, 8 job fairs reached 9,470 people with more than 89 companies involved, and 597 people obtained technical and vocational skills certification.

UNHCR also enhanced business opportunities in the Green Economy, engaged 465 people in ecological initiatives and supported five community-based recycling groups to prevent environmental pollution while generating decent livelihoods for families.

In 2023, UNCHR intensified its partnerships with Financial Service Providers (FSPs), increasing from 5 to 14 the number of banks and cooperatives actively providing access to deposit accounts, payments, and credit for forcibly displaced populations. Together with FSPs, UNHCR carried out 49 mobile financial services brigades in 15 localities to improve displaced peoples' access to financial services and assisted 626 refugees with cash transfers to open savings accounts. UNHCR also collaborated with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to launch a study on financial services for forcibly displaced persons in Ecuador. These efforts together have translated into an increase from 14% in 2022 to 29% in 2023 in the proportion of refugees with a bank account.

During 2023, UNHCR also intensified efforts to partner with and convene expert financial and livelihoods actors. For instance, the Ministry of Production included refugees' businesses in their value chain inclusive strategy in three cities, while the Ministry of Labour received evidence-based arguments to address gaps in the labor market. Understanding that local governments have a deeper understanding of their communities' priorities, UNCHR also cooperated with 29 local governments and increased the availability of public economic services in 10 provinces.

As for the private sector, the second edition of the Inclusive Company Seal recognized 67 new companies nationwide as having positive hiring and employment practices with refugees. The collaborative effort with the UN Global Compact also saw significant growth, uniting 120 allies in an active network. Finally, UN Global Compact proposed a pledge as part of the commitments made at the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

15. Outcome Area: Resettlement and Complementary Pathways

An increased number of people with and for whom UNHCR works are resettled through strengthened and efficient mechanisms.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1,585	2,944	2,962
15.2 Average processing time from resettlement submission to departure under normal priority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	971.00	270.00	334.00

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

Resettlement remained a key component of UNHCR's protection and solutions strategy. In 2023, Ecuador reached historic submission numbers, with 2,962 people submitted for resettlement by UNHCR, compared to 1,585 people in 2022. Numbers of departures also continued to increase, with 1,427 refugees departing from Ecuador to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

On 18 October 2023, Ecuador launched the "Safe Mobility Offices" Initiative (SMO), with the support of UNHCR and IOM. During Phase 1 of the initiative, UNHCR identified refugees in need of resettlement through the UNHCR database, proGres. Following the launch of Phase 2, on 20 November 2023, refugees and migrants could self-identify and register on the SMO website, for consideration by the Government of the United States for humanitarian and other regular pathways. The programme opened for Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, Venezuelan, and Colombian nationals who were in Ecuador on or before 18 October 2023 and who had applied for asylum or initiated their regularization process in the country. UNHCR strengthened its communications with communities' efforts to ensure interested applicants had access to the information they needed to participate in the SMO initiative.

By 31 December, 8,296 people had completed their online registration on the SMO portal. A total of 7,677 people were assigned to UNHCR for consideration for humanitarian pathways (UNHCR resettlement) while 422 people were assigned to IOM for counselling on other pathways. Between 18 October 2023 and 31 December 2023, UNHCR referred 1,138 people for resettlement to the United States under the SMO initiative. The primary nationalities submitted for resettlement consideration in 2023 were Venezuelans and Colombians, followed by Cubans.

Throughout 2023, UNHCR received referrals of vulnerable refugees potentially in need of resettlement from field offices and partners, particularly individuals with urgent protection needs and cases that did not qualify for the SMO programme. The resettlement programme continued to address the needs of the most vulnerable, while combining traditional referrals and identification methods with new identification methods put forward by the innovative SMO initiative. In 2023, Survivors of Violence and/or Torture continued to be the primary submission category for most cases submitted for resettlement from Ecuador. There was also a notable increase of cases submitted under the Legal and/or Physical Protection Needs category, and Women and Girls at Risk, linked to the deterioration of the security context in Ecuador.

UNHCR also referred and coached 50 individuals for the Canadian Labour Mobility Programme, Talent Lift, working together with partners to identify possible candidates for complementary pathways to Canada.

16. Outcome Area: Integration and other Local Solutions

Needs of the people and communities with and for whom UNHCR works are addressed within development agendas and included in social protection programs and policies.

People with and for whom UNHCR works have access to alternative migration pathways and documentation that supports their local integration.

Public opinion and host communities have a more inclusive approach of people with and for whom UNHCR works.

Indicators	Population Type	Strategy Baseline	Target (2023)	Actual (2023)
16.1 Proportion of people with secure tenure rights to housing and/or land	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	32.08%	32.00%	13.36%

Progress Against the Desired Outcome

In Ecuador, Ministerial Agreement 037 of 2022 limits monetary transfers from the social protection system to Ecuadorian citizens. However, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion (MIES) provided services to 687 Venezuelan and Colombian children in child development programs, while 632 children and adolescents received specific protection services, and 312 older adults and 39 persons with disabilities received public assistance. Additionally, MIES supported 12,485 individuals in situations of human mobility.

To enhance refugees' and migrants' access to legal status, social protection, and local integration, UNHCR and IOM aided the government's regularization efforts. UNHCR assisted the Civil Registry in expanding its capacity for people in human mobility, including the regularization process, and supported MIES in developing a protocol for identifying and regularizing unaccompanied or separated children. In collaboration with UNHCR, the World Bank disbursed \$30 million from the Global Concessional Financing Facility to support the regularization process.

By the end of 2023, 259,000 people had registered for regularization, and 201,000 received a registration of permanence certificate. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported 126,900 people registered for visas, with 87,970 VIRTE visas and 72,000 Ecuadorian ID Cards issued by year-end.

UNHCR co-led the Protection and Communications groups of the R4V Platform (GTRM) coordinating interventions to support the regularization process and provide advice to interested individuals.

The World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and UNHCR promoted inclusive projects in education, housing, and labor market integration. The World Bank approved a \$190 million loan to enhance learning in areas with high refugee concentrations. UNHCR and the IDB successfully advocated for the inclusion of forcibly displaced people in a new policy to access subsidies/incentives for public housing. IDB also approved a new project (\$ 25 million loan/ \$3.8 million grant) to contribute to labour insertion in quality jobs. UNHCR is a strategic partner for the World Bank and IDB to implement these projects in the next five years.

UNHCR engaged in an advocacy strategy with media, the private sector, sports teams and others, to help form public opinion through the “Un Mundo Posible” initiative (launched mid-2023, to be implemented through 2025). Through briefings, events, missions, interviews, and multimedia content, UNHCR shaped public opinion to be more inclusive of people in human mobility. With new actors like the Aucas football team, six new collaborators, and Aeropostale, UNHCR mobilized influential figures to share positive messages about welcoming refugees into their communities. UNHCR reached over 700,000 people through events, generated 380 free press pieces, and 1.7 million people on social media with over 390 multimedia products – generating savings of around \$ 500,000.

2.2. Age, Gender and Diversity

UNHCR strengthened its reporting and recording systems to ensure the integration of the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach. In 2023, UNHCR improved reporting by adjusting disaggregated information for diverse groups. The Operation also strengthened the capacities of staff using proGRES to ensure the correct recording of individuals and family groups, integrating AGD standards, such as the proper application of the Washington Group Questionnaire on Disability.

Section 3: Resources

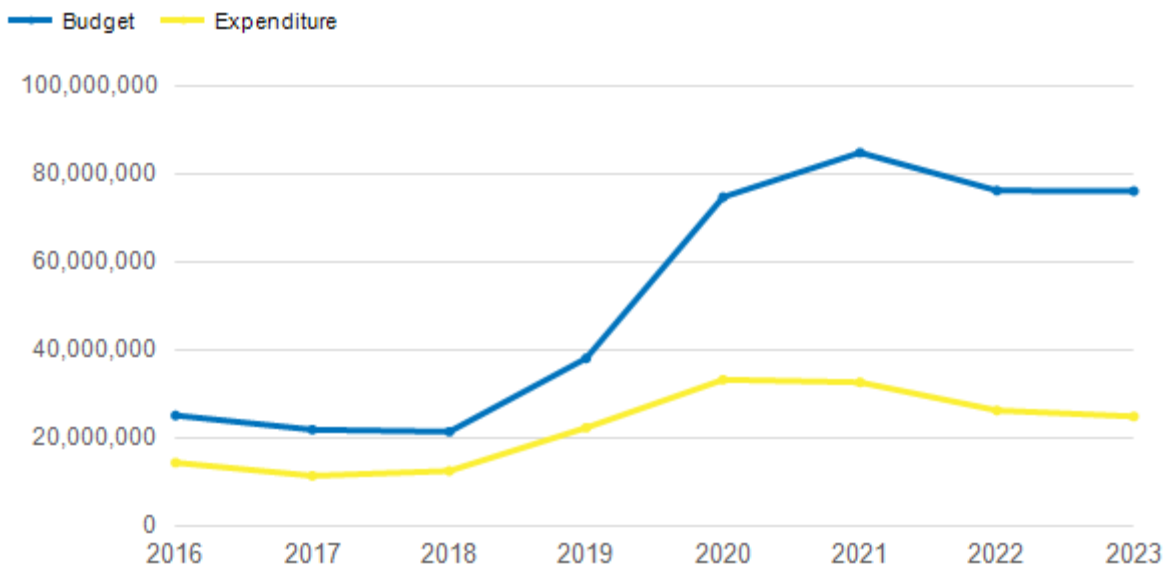
3.1 Financial Data

(Financial figures in USD)

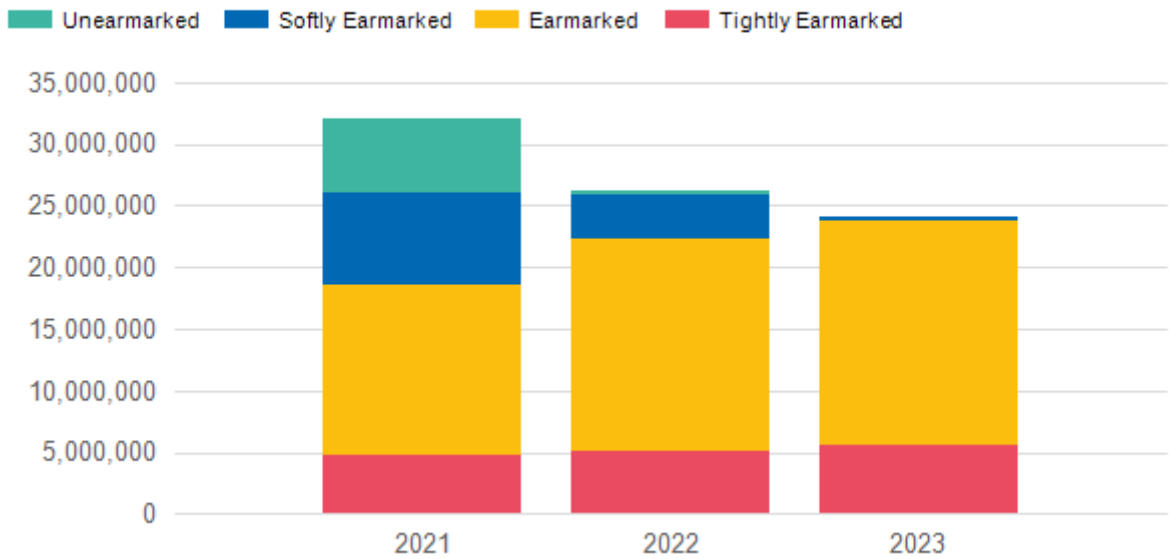
Impact Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
IA1: Protect	26,850,847	12,547,468	46.73%	12,365,180	98.55%
IA2: Assist	19,733,636	5,862,660	29.71%	5,862,660	100.00%
IA4: Solve	29,415,518	6,642,875	22.58%	6,587,440	99.17%
All Impact Areas		79,571			
Total	76,000,000	25,132,573	33.07%	24,815,281	98.74%

Outcome Area	Final Budget	Funds Available	Funds Available as % of Budget	Expenditure	Expenditure as % of Funds Available
OA1: Access/Doc	7,415,138	4,590,487	61.91%	4,590,487	100.00%
OA2: Status	3,215,142	1,748,141	54.37%	1,748,141	100.00%
OA4: GBV	3,536,857	1,374,021	38.85%	1,374,021	100.00%
OA5: Children	2,665,143	1,102,714	41.38%	1,102,714	100.00%
OA6: Justice	2,803,428	747,391	26.66%	747,391	100.00%
OA7: Community	7,060,130	2,243,806	31.78%	2,243,806	100.00%
OA8: Well-being	13,111,739	3,066,574	23.39%	3,066,574	100.00%
OA10: Health	2,066,528	919,069	44.47%	919,069	100.00%
OA11: Education	4,555,369	1,877,017	41.20%	1,877,017	100.00%
OA13: Livelihood	16,460,121	2,209,761	13.42%	2,209,761	100.00%
OA15: Resettle	1,755,066	839,864	47.85%	839,864	100.00%
OA16: Integrate	11,355,339	4,096,436	36.07%	4,096,436	100.00%
All Outcome Areas		317,293			
Total	76,000,000	25,132,573	33.07%	24,815,281	98.74%

Budget and Expenditure Trend



Contributions Trend by Type



3.2. Resources Overview

In 2023, UNHCR assigned its resources to support operational priorities, such as investing in the government’s registration capacity and providing life-saving support through the delivery of cash assistance to vulnerable displaced people. Upholding its mandate, UNHCR funded initiatives to facilitate access to the asylum system and reception support, including emergency shelter, kits and support for various actors involved in humanitarian aid. These efforts underscored UNHCR’s commitment to meeting the immediate needs of displaced individuals and ensuring they receive necessary assistance.

The response to the most vulnerable populations in situations of human mobility, including separated and

unaccompanied children, and gender-based violence survivors, was sustained through projects with partners and initiatives involving civil society. However, available funding remained limited to cover the needs identified, especially in contexts of increased violence affecting geographic areas of the country hosting significant numbers of refugees and migrants.

Although some interventions were maintained regarding access to health and education, thanks to generous contributions from donors, significant gaps persisted, particularly given the country's challenges in the implementation of social policies.

With a keen understanding of the importance of integration for displaced people, UNHCR supported the regularization process led by the Ecuadorian Government, as well as initiatives focused on integration. The operation also carried out climate actions in the green economy, fostering economic integration projects and enhancing risk management through community-driven initiatives.

Looking ahead, sustained funding in 2024 will be crucial for the operation to maintain its support for the asylum system, social and economic inclusion and solutions for the population in human mobility, ensuring continuity in addressing the evolving needs of those affected by displacement.

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

4.1 Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

In a context of political instability, insecurity, slow economic growth, discrimination and xenophobia, UNHCR will engage in advocacy and strategic alliances to maintain and improve the protection environment. With reduced funding, the operation has taken steps to adjust, reorient, and reprioritize, including by closing or reducing field presences, eliminating or downgrading staffing and reducing partnership agreements.

Alarming levels of insecurity reduced access and opportunities for safe environments for people in human mobility and host communities. UNHCR advocated with institutions and local governments to include refugees and migrants in their plans and to promote access to regularization. UNHCR also advocated with development actors to include the population in human mobility in their initiatives. UNHCR will continue to work with local governments, refugees' associations and host communities (also in dire need of protection) to mitigate the impact of the deteriorating security situation on the exercise of their rights.

Voluntary returns were not promoted or facilitated by the operation in 2023. Irregular status and lack of access to documentation remained key challenges impeding the local integration and socio-economic inclusion of the displaced population; however, UNHCR provided 6,611 people with income-generating opportunities to promote sustainable livelihoods and integration. Available quotas for resettlement increased and 2,962 people were submitted while 1,427 people departed for resettlement in 2023. With the new SMO initiative, UNHCR in 2024 will increase resettlement availability with 11,500 slots for this protection pathway to the United States.

UNHCR will continue engaging with actors such as the private sector (the main job-creating actors in the country) and international financial institutions to include people in human mobility in the development agenda, as well as credit and bank institutions to achieve financial inclusion.



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