

# UNHCR Ecuador Monthly Update

Edition's special focus: Lago Agrio



*Leidy fled Colombia with her family to seek asylum in Ecuador. Now, at age 25 and thanks to a scholarship, she has found a job and started a business that contributes to the development of her community, while helping her provide for her and her 7-year-old daughter.*

## Figures at a glance

**70,527**

People have been recognized as refugees

**482,897**

Venezuelans are currently living in Ecuador

**38%**

of financial requirements have been funded as of 1 November

## Our response in 2021 in figures

1 January to date



**42,478**

people received cash-based assistance for protection or emergent needs



**31,533**

people received hygiene and Caminante kits



**9,857**

people were supported with emergency shelter



**9,549**

people have participated in livelihoods projects

## Operational context

In October, the epidemiological situation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic remained stable in Ecuador, with low numbers of infections, deaths and hospital occupancy. The vaccination campaign continued its course, surpassing 10 million people fully vaccinated (65% of the population). In this regard, UNHCR continued to support the Ministry of Health to ensure the inclusion of people in human mobility in the immunization process. At least 25,000 refugees and migrants had received the two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine by the end of October.

An average of 1,700 people per day entered through irregular crossings across the country's northern and southern borders, while around 1,000 people left the country daily, according to estimated data from UNHCR and its partners in the Refugee and Migrant Task Force (GTRM, by its acronym in Spanish). This represented a slight decrease in arrivals and departures compared to September, which may have

been due to the Ecuadorian government's declaration of a state of emergency on October 18. This state of emergency, decreed in order to combat insecurity in the country, led to an increased presence of military and police operations in border provinces. Entry of Venezuelans and Colombians through irregular paths decreased, as usual when there is an increase in security operations near the border. In addition, heavy rains in the Andean region increased river flows and caused damage to the informal paths at the Northern border, also contributing to the decrease in cross-border flows.

To respond to this situation, UNHCR continued its protection monitoring activities at the borders, with the objective of knowing the needs of the refugee and migrant population that arrived in the country. UNHCR also continued to provide humanitarian assistance through emergency shelter, hygiene and walking kits, as well as cash to people with specific protection needs.



**UNHCR and Korea promote the inclusion of more than 200,000 Ecuadorian and refugee people in vulnerable situations**

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) signed an agreement in Quito on October 26 that seeks to promote the integration and protect the rights of people in human mobility and host communities in Ecuador.

This joint project, to which KOICA has

contributed US\$6 million, is expected to benefit more than 200,000 people through initiatives in health, education, financial inclusion, as well as access to employment and entrepreneurship.

The initiative largely seeks to promote sustainable integration and peaceful coexistence among people in human mobility and local communities in the provinces of Pichincha, Santo Domingo, Imbabura, Carchi and Tungurahua until 2024. “We are very happy to sign this agreement that will undoubtedly serve to improve the living conditions of people who had to flee their countries and found

a new home in Ecuador,” said Giovanni Bassu, UNHCR’s Representative in Ecuador. “Both people in human mobility and their host communities have a lot to contribute to the development of the country, they just need an opportunity, and that is precisely what this project can do.”

The Korean Ambassador, Bongwoo KO expressed his joy in signing of the Agreement as an achievement of “leaving no one behind” and commented that the Korean Government has contributed \$500,000 in humanitarian assistance that now adds to the \$6 million with this project through the multilateral channel.

**UNHCR and partners shared tips on human rights reporting with journalists across the country**



UNHCR and its GTRM partners facilitated four workshops for journalists across the country to provide them with relevant tools and share with them tips on how to report with a human rights approach. These workshops were supported by the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V), led by UNHCR and IOM.

The trainings were delivered in Quito, Guayaquil, Ibarra and Lago Agrio, and were attended by more than 50 journalists who cover issues related to refugees and migrants for international, national and local media.

Participants were able to meet the local leaders of the GTRM and learnt how to use

the existing data consultations tools. This will facilitate the work of journalists when reporting on human mobility issues, as they will have access to official sources and figures issued by United Nations agencies.

“The work of the press is crucial nowadays. Therefore, it is very important to counteract the narratives that promote discrimination against refugees,” said Yolanda Zapata, UNHCR Head of Office in Pichincha, Sto. Domingo and Sierra Centro, who led the workshop for journalists in Quito.

“There are many stories of people in human mobility that show positive examples of integration. It is important to make them known,” said Miriam Gonzalez, UNHCR Head of Office in Lago Agrio, during the workshop held in that city on October 26.

**UNHCR received recognition from the Public Ombudsman’s Office for its work in protection of people in human mobility**

On the occasion of the commemoration of Public Ombudsman’s Day, UNHCR was recognized for its work in favor of the legal protection of people in human mobility and their host communities.

For several years, UNHCR and the Public Defender’s Office have been carrying out different joint projects to safeguard the rights of the people in human mobility as well as to prevent any violation of their

rights and protect them from aspects such as discrimination and xenophobia.

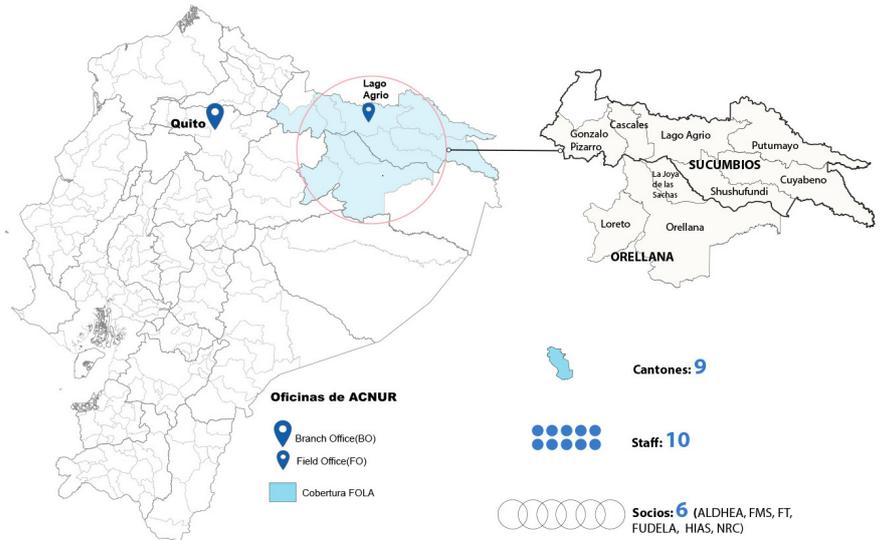
UNHCR is constantly providing training to the Public Defender’s Office employees so that they can carry out their work in the best possible conditions. This recognition motivates colleagues to fulfill UNHCR’s mandate in all operations and to carry out their work with the best attitude and predisposition.



## Monthly focus: Lago Agrio

Located in the province of Sucumbíos, which borders the Colombian department of Putumayo, UNHCR's Lago Agrio Field Office started its operations in 2000. From this office, UNHCR covers another Amazonian province: Orellana. These provinces, marked by the impact of the Colombian situation, oil exploitation, environmental degradation, and a reduced socioeconomic development, face numerous challenges for the integration of refugees and migrants.

In order to promote local integration and access to livelihoods for more than 12,000 refugees and migrants who live in this area, UNHCR works closely with local authorities (GADs) and includes host communities as participants of its projects.



## News from Lago Agrio

### UNHCR supported vaccination brigades in border areas of Sucumbíos



UNHCR accompanied the Ministry of Public Health in vaccination brigades against COVID-19 and regular vaccination schemes to remote border areas of Puerto del Carmen, Sansahuari, Palma Roja and Puerto Nuevo in the province of Sucumbíos, where access to healthcare is limited.

80 people were vaccinated, including refugees as well as the host community. UNHCR provided support to facilitate the land and fluvial transportation for health personnel.

Lourdes Bagui, community promoter, indicated the importance of conducting the brigade to help bring access to vaccines against COVID-19 to communities in border areas.



### UNHCR donated equipment to be used to protect refugees' rights

UNHCR donated 6 computers with desks and chairs to the Council of Protection Rights (COCAPRODE) in Orellana, to set up a computer centre to promote access to internet for the community. Open to both people in human mobility and vulnerable host community members, they can now follow virtual school classes, renew documents, or file asylum claims. COCAPRODE has also delivered a printer at the computer centre, so users can print documents without any cost.

Santiago Pasquel, executive secretary of COCAPRODE, indicates that around 60 people per week are using this service, which has had a positive impact on families with limited resources as now they can have access to basic services like education.


 Stories from the field

### Education is the driving force to change the lifes of refugees and migrants

Seven years ago, Leidy and her family began a long journey from Colombia to Ecuador to seek asylum. Today, at 25, she is a mother of a 7-year-old and a graduate of technical studies in Agroindustry - an opportunity she received thanks to a scholarship programme led by UNHCR through its partner Foundation of the Americas (FUDELA) in Lago Agrio. Being a full-time mother and student was challenging, but did not prevent her from excelling in her learning. When she graduated, the area of “Food Processing” in the institution where she was studying, invited her to join their team.

On top of her work, she decided to try out a project that would not only benefit her employer, but also her entire host community. She joined “Tiendas Amigas” (Friendly Stores), a project where she is in charge of distributing agricultural products grown in her community and sells them in local stores.

As such, small and medium-size growers and local distribution stores benefit, resulting in fresher products at more convenient prices. Her entrepreneurial capacity did not stop there. Thanks to seed capital provided by UNHCR, Leidy started a business reproducing a typical Colombian dish, smoked meat, an opportunity to begin. She was able to design her own handmade machinery to smoke the meats and start with the distribution on demand.

Leidy hopes to save enough money to buy more tools so she can expand her business and become a vendor for stores in her community. She sees in her venture to sell smoked meats the opportunity that will give her economic independence and a better future for her and her family.

### We thank the contributions of our donors

Updated to 1 November, 2021

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