



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Ecuador

**Duration:** May 2006 to April 2009

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNHCR; UNICEF; WFP

**Other Implementing Partners:** Local municipalities; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion; local NGOs and CSOs

**Budget:** \$1,914,219.88

**Key Words:** Displacement; access to basic social services; rights of children

## BACKGROUND

The ongoing conflict in neighboring Colombia, coupled with geographical isolation, lack of governance, weak institutions, and persistent social inequities have resulted in a situation of widespread insecurities in Ecuador's Northern Border region, leaving the most vulnerable groups – including refugees, poor families, women and children – with little protection and inadequate access to basic social

services. In addition to the 32,305 asylum seekers, many refugees, particularly unaccompanied children, often faced with discrimination, have been excluded from access to education, healthcare and other basic services. Meanwhile, in the provinces of Esmeraldas and Sucumbíos, women and girls – including refugees and migrants – have been trapped in networks of prostitution and sexual exploitation.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

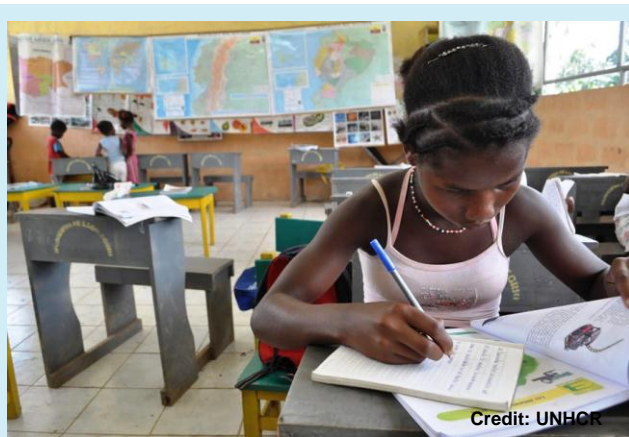
The overall goal of the project was to protect the human rights of the most vulnerable populations, namely Ecuadorian and Colombian children, adolescents, and their families living in Ecuador's Northern Border region. Specifically, the project aimed to: (i) strengthen the existing legal frameworks

and the available protection mechanisms; (ii) improve the quality of education and promote better integration of refugee children; (iii) reduce malnourishment among the most vulnerable; and (iv) establish "Community Preparedness Plans" in order to better respond to situations of significant displacement.

### BENEFICIARIES

The project's beneficiaries were the most vulnerable living in the provinces of Esmeraldas, El Carchi, Imbabura and Sucumbíos, in the Northern Border region of Ecuador. Among these, more than 520,000 children benefited from the establishment of Canton Councils for Children and Adolescents throughout the

four provinces. In addition, more than 40,000 individuals received official identity cards, thereby giving them access to basic social services. Lastly, the health security of nearly 80,000 families improved through better nutrition and access to appropriate vaccinations.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) To build the capacity of public protection bodies in the Northern Border region, the project extended the reach of the National Council by establishing 26 Canton Councils for Children and Adolescents (CCNAs). In addition, the project supported the organization of protection networks, bringing together local institutions and civil society to monitor the enforcement of the rights of children and adolescents. These combined efforts strengthened the local protection mechanisms to address the special needs of children and adolescents in the target provinces.

(ii) The project established Integration Corners (ICs) in schools in all four of the provinces, which aimed to ensure the local integration of refugees. In addition to guaranteeing that refugee children would benefit from education, the ICs also raised awareness among local students, teachers and parents on issues such as integration, asylum, multi-cultural diversity, human rights and a culture of peace. The success of this two-pronged approach through the ICs coupled with the engagement of Government institutions resulted in the

mainstreaming of such practices into the school curriculum of all public schools in the Northern Border region.

(iii) The project identified a critical gap in the National Contingency Plan for addressing the inflow of Colombian refugees into the Northern Border region. To address this gap – a lack of response mechanisms for inflows of less than 50 persons – the project supported the development of community preparedness plans (CPPs) through engaging local authorities, parishes and communities. As a complement to the national plan, the CPPs functioned as early warning mechanisms indicating possible large-scale refugee inflows. These plans have helped local authorities make timely decisions and coordinate their responses with various institutions to ensure more immediate and effective responses thereby mitigating the negative impacts on both local communities and Colombian refugees.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Through the human security protection and empowerment framework, the project promoted the identification of gaps in national protection mechanisms that left individuals and communities vulnerable in the Northern Border region of Ecuador. In order to address these gaps, the project relied heavily on increasing civic participation across groups and on building upon existing capacities, even among

the most vulnerable communities. With an empowered citizenry, the project successfully established forums for dialogue between national and local actors, ultimately improving the effective implementation of national policies at the local level as well as bolstering the capacity of local authorities and communities to implement early warning and protection mechanisms in a contextually relevant manner.