

ECUADOR – COVID 19

14 October 2020
Update 6

Key Figures

148,171
confirmed cases
and **12,235**
deaths due to
COVID-19
by 13 October
(7,991 confirmed
and 4,244
probable).

362,862
Venezuelan
refugees and
migrants living
in Ecuador
(August 2020).

51%
of funding
needs received
by 7 October
2020.

Situational Highlights

- Evictions due to lack of rent payment continued rising. From 17 March until 30 September, 1,018 cases received advice regarding evictions from the Office of the Ombudsman. Of those, 441, mostly of Venezuelans, have been positively resolved and 577 received counselling. During the same period, 346 cases received legal advice by the Public Defender's Office.
- According to a study on the financial inclusion of Venezuelan refugees, migrants and vulnerable local population in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil, 82 per cent of the surveyed population do not have access to any financial service and only 2 per cent of the Venezuelan population has accessed credit products. The Study was led by World Council of Credit Unions and received financial and technical support from the United States Agency for International Development and UNHCR staff in Ecuador, respectively.

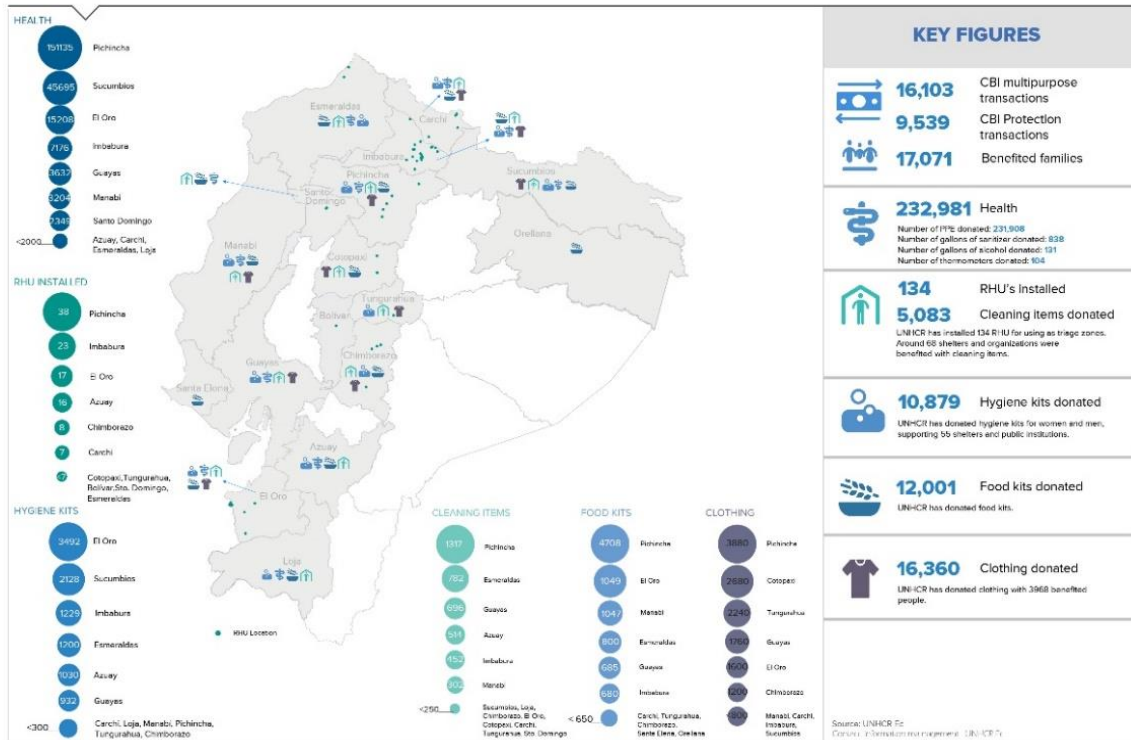
UNHCR's Response

In accordance with its programme criticality and re-prioritization exercise in the face of COVID-19, UNHCR is giving priority to:

- delivery of life-saving assistance (cash-based interventions and core relief items);
- provision of reliable information on preventing measures against COVID-19 and available services;
- border and protection monitoring;
- access to the asylum system;
- protection of people with specific protection needs and mental and physical health of people of concern;
- support to health infrastructure and shelter; and
- provision and equipment (for COVID-19) for emergency shelters and health structures.

UNHCR ECUADOR COVID-19 RESPONSE

18 March - 07 October 2020



Shelter

- Forty-three shelters supported by UNHCR continue to be active during the pandemic to provide emergency shelter to women and children at risk, members of the LGBTI community, and vulnerable families. Since the onset of the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR has installed 134 RHUs in 47 health centres, 16 hospitals and three temporary accommodation centres to be used as resting, triage and isolation areas according to protocols for COVID-19. In addition, the Office supported 55 shelters and public institutions with hygiene kits, personal protection equipment, rehabilitation, management support and training.

Humanitarian Assistance

- UNHCR and 12 partners are distributing hygiene kits, blankets, mattresses and hygiene and disinfectant supplies throughout the country for a total of USD 329,804. UNHCR has also equipped and improved infrastructure of shelters, partners, hospitals and other actors worth USD 15,843. The Office has acquired USD 182,481 worth of personal protective equipment (facemasks, gloves, thermometers, disposable gowns, protective glasses, protective gowns and hand-sanitizers) to be provided to UNHCR staff, partners and other actors on the first line of response.
- UNHCR assisted 17,778 households with cash-based interventions between 18 March and 9 October through a remote system and applying an expanded criterion to help them cover their basic needs.
- From 18 March to 7 October, UNHCR assisted 19,372 cases (76.5 per cent Venezuelans and 21.23 per cent Colombians) through UNHCR Protection lines in Cuenca, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, Huaquillas, Ibarra, Lago Agrio, Quito, Ambato and Tulcán. Fifty-four per cent of calls were requests for CBI. The second most common request was for legal assistance, including RSD and regularization.

Protection

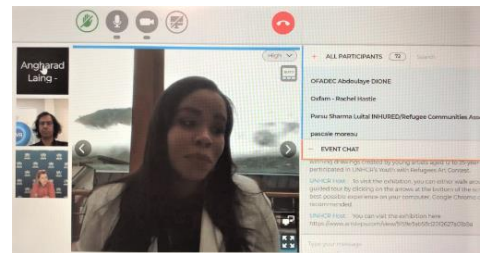
- Refugee community networks are helping detect COVID-19 cases in Ecuador, as part of a Community Epidemiological Surveillance System developed by UNHCR. The system is helping ensure the early detection and referral for treatment of COVID-19 cases among refugee population. Since it was launched in July, 312 suspected cases have been referred to national health authorities. This community health referral strategy relies on UNHCR's pre-existing humanitarian and refugee community networks to help identify COVID-19 cases among refugee and migrant communities. The network comprises partners, community organizations and civil society, complementing the Government's existing Epidemiological Surveillance System to better reach refugees and migrants, who tend to move continuously within the country.



Installation of tents outside of a shelter in Huaquillas, El Oro Province.

Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR, in coordination with the Offices of the Ombudsman and Public Defender, is advocating for a Civil Registry brigade to provide legal documentation to some 100 people of the Awá indigenous community in Carchi Province. A mobile brigade will allow access to documentation to individuals living in remote areas where barriers to documentation include lack of transport and connectivity.
- On 23 September, UNHCR supported brigades of the Civil Registry that included support of the Public Defender, Ombudsman, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion as part of the Peace Building Fund in Esmeraldas Province. The brigades had been suspended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and UNHCR supported the brigade with biosecurity items including masks, alcohol gel, and social distancing measures. UNHCR also supported in the transportation of approximately 120 individuals from Mataje to San Lorenzo for ID cards and for the inscription of approximately 57 children from the community that is primarily individuals of Afro ethnicity. UNHCR will continue to support the brigades until the end of the year in the border communities where it has identified approximately 2,500 children and adolescents of Afro and indigenous descent without inscription in the civil registry placing them in danger of being in a situation of statelessness.
- On 30 September, Gisel Baron, a member of UNHCR Ecuador's Inclusive Communities project (ComIn), participated in the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs, as a representative from a Refugee Leadership Organization. During her intervention, Gisel, a 29-year-old Venezuelan who fled her country in 2018, explained how she provided humanitarian assistance to people of concern and the host community during the COVID-19 health emergency in the city of Baños, Tungurahua Province: "We have shown the community that we are open to contribute without distinction and that solidarity has no borders." Project ComIn was developed by UNHCR Pichincha with the vision to put the people of the community at the centre of designing solutions to two common challenges: improving social integration and creating more work opportunities.
- On 8 September, Medium.com published [a story on collaborative approaches](#) to creating community-based solutions developed by UNHCR Ecuador: supporting community-based decision-making; collaborating to put data into context; and letting the community lead the way. The article highlights the "imagination of the teams that applied



to the Innovation Fund, but also the commitment top management in Ecuador has made to fostering a culture of innovation”.

- UNHCR continues to invest in innovative Communications with Communities approaches to promote information on access to services and rights. For the past six months, UNHCR has jointly supported with partners and UN agencies the publication of messages and videos on two large LED screens in public parks in Tulcán, Carchi Province. The information is useful to both local Ecuadorians and newly arrived Venezuelans and Colombians as they face barriers to access services since most have moved to teleworking due to the pandemic.
- As part of “Sin Fronteras” initiative, UNHCR is supporting a new commercial delivery initiative called “PIDelivery”. Through an app it connects 21 small stores with potential clients in three neighbourhoods in the north of Quito. On 5 October, twelve young refugees from Venezuela received their bikes and equipment donated by UNHCR to start working as delivery drivers. Banco Pichincha is supporting the small stores to improve their business through digital marketing. “Sin Fronteras” is a multipartner initiative supported by UNHCR, the International Development Bank, the Alliance for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Banco Pichincha, Fundación CRISFE and others that seeks to fundraise and develop partnerships to implement initiatives for the economic inclusion of refugees, migrants and vulnerable Ecuadorians.
- UNHCR and partner FEPP are supporting the autonomous decentralized government (GAD) of San Lorenzo, Esmeraldas Province, to implement business initiatives with an ecological approach, called “Bici Entrega” and “Tu Mercadito”. The initiative will directly benefit 16 micro-enterprises of Venezuelan, Colombian and Ecuadorian youth and will provide safe delivery services of food, medicines and other goods in 25 neighbourhoods of the Canton. “Bici Entrega” and “Tu Mercadito” are part of the early recovery strategy for COVID-19 focusing on fostering entrepreneurship networks.
- On 17 September, CAMBALACHE launched a platform with both online classes and delivery of products from La Floresta neighbourhood in Quito. The platform aims to provide an ecological and friendly community-driven alternative. UNHCR is supporting this community initiative while ensuring the inclusion of people of concern in the delivery team.
- In the Framework of the Safe from the Start project, and in coordination with the Ministry of Public Health and UNFPA, UNHCR is supporting the update of the Technical Guidelines for the Attention of LGBTI+ Population in Health Services. The new version reviews previous recommendations based on key developments regarding sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual status.
- UNHCR Ecuador is currently piloting a new chatbot system with the support of the Innovation Service that is replacing the previous one developed by the Operation. The CBP team, together with PI, are currently implementing a user testing phase to improve the quality of information and of communication flows within the platform. The new chatbot is expected to go live on 30 October, supporting the Communication with Communities strategy.



Government and Inter-agency Coordination

- Partners of the Working Group on Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (GTRM) finalized the eighth cycle of reporting assistance to the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population. There is an increase in regular protection and integration activities due to the total or partial opening of cities. Protection support due to evictions remains a priority as well as assistance in education to ensure that Venezuelan children have access to virtual education.

Funding

- UNHCR is appealing for USD 74 million to provide international protection and assistance to refugees, asylum seekers, their host communities and others of concern in Ecuador. Only 51 per cent has been funded by 7 October. We would also appreciate it if contributions were to be softly earmarked. Such flexible funding will be key in allowing a timely response to the evolving needs as required.

UNHCR is thankful to the donors who provide funds to Ecuador:

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