

# ECUADOR – COVID 19

5 August 2020 – Update 4

## Key Figures

**206** cantons out of 221 have decided to partially reopen their economies by 5 August.

**88,866** confirmed cases and **5,847** deaths due to COVID-19 by 5 August.

**38 per cent** of funding needs received by 4 August 2020.

**362,887** Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in Ecuador (December 2019).

## Situational Highlights

- The Government-led registration and regularization exercises for Venezuelans reopened on 29 June and will close on 14 August. Initially it was due to end on 31 March, but executive decrees extended the deadline due to the COVID-19 emergency. Venezuelan organizations have requested a longer extension due to financial difficulties, unavailability of documentation or difficulties in transport to complete the processes.

## 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 persons 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.

Monitoring results show accelerated implementation rates of humanitarian assistance programmes, particularly cash-based interventions, as a result of more persons falling under extreme vulnerability due to the pandemic.

## Shelter

- Quito is now the city with most confirmed COVID-19 cases in Ecuador. By 5 August, there were 13,949 cases. Some hospitals and health units have requested refugee housing units (RHUs) from UNHCR to expand their capacity to provide health care to a greater number of patients. In response to the situation in Quito, and in addition to the support provided to the temporary hospital located in the north of the city, in the premises of the old airport, UNHCR will donate nine RHUs to the hospital in Calderón (north of the city), 10 to Enrique Garcés Hospital and eight RHUs to the Health Centre in Guamaní, both in the south. In Sucumbíos province, the Regional Hospital in Lago Agrio has requested support with a triage area for suspected cases of COVID-19. Since the onset of the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR has installed 67 RHUs in 34 health centres or 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 has supported 62 shelters and public institutions with hygiene kits, PPEs, rehabilitation, management support and trainings.



Staff from the Patronato Municipal Amparo Social in Latacunga take a patient's temperature at the RHU installed by UNHCR to be used for triage.

*UNHCR/Jaime Giménez*

- On 8 July, UNHCR visited the San Juan de Dios shelter in Quito. Due to the health emergency the shelter had been forced to suspend the reception of new arrivals. UNHCR is working on technical recommendations so that the shelter can resume activities with biosafety standards. The reopening of the shelter is of great importance, as most shelters in Quito have closed down. Previously, San Juan de Dios hosted up to 274 people a night, of which approximately 70 per cent were people of concern to UNHCR.

## Humanitarian assistance

- UNHCR has increased the distribution of core relief items to respond to increased needs. Twelve UNHCR partners are distributing the items throughout the country. So far 11,114 hygiene kits, containing toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, towels, toilet paper, deodorant, shampoo, and sanitary pads have been distributed. UNHCR has also supported shelters, partners, hospitals and other actors with disinfection and hygiene supplies worth USD 188,100. It has acquired some USD 130,379 worth of personal protective equipment (facemasks, gloves, thermometers, disposable gowns, protective glasses, protective gowns and hand-sanitizer) to be provided to UNHCR staff, partners and other actors on the first line of response.
- Between 18 March and 24 July UNHCR assisted 10,205 households with cash-based interventions, through an adapted delivery system working with digital codes, avoiding cash and cards, thus minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infection, and based on an expanded beneficiary criteria, to help them cover their basic needs.
- From 18 March to 28 July, UNHCR assisted 12,709 cases (78 per cent Venezuelans and 19 per cent Colombians) through UNHCR Protection lines in Cuenca, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, Huaquillas, Ibarra, Lago Agrio, Quito, Ambato and Tulcán. Fifty-eight per cent of calls were requests for CBI. The second most common request was for legal assistance, including legal stay.
- On 14 July, UNHCR in Esmeraldas and UNHCR IT unit met with the GAD in Esmeraldas and the telephone and internet Company TELCONET to install 25 free Wifi points for 18 months in vulnerable neighbourhoods, benefitting an estimated 16,600 individuals during the COVID-19 emergency. Connectivity equipment is provided by UNHCR; free internet by TELCONET, and logistical support by the local authorities.
- UNHCR has designed a methodology for community epidemiological surveillance, and has trained associations of people of concern to UNHCR to carry it out. It has also provided provided free internet to 22 members of associations of Venezuelans in Quito and Sierra Centro who participate in the epidemiological community surveillance.



UNHCR and its partner FUDELA conduct epidemiological surveillance in El Carmelo, a small rural community located in the Andean region. UNHCR staff and more than 50 organizations have been trained to conduct epidemiological surveillance during home visits, delivery of humanitarian assistance and phone-based assistance. *UNHCR/ Sebastián Narvaez*

## Protection

- Evictions due to lack of rent payment continue to rise, with a notable increase in calls for humanitarian assistance from Venezuelans and Colombians with small businesses who were forced to close as a result of COVID-19. Many Ecuadorian businesses have also closed in July. More resources are needed to support these families, both in terms of shelter solutions and legal support to prevent evictions. From 17 March until 30 June, 804 such cases received advice from the Office of the Ombudsman. Of those, 313, mostly of Venezuelans, have been positively resolved. In the same period, the Public Defender's Office received an additional 321 cases, of which 154 were resolved through mediation. Eighty-nine cases are pending resolution.
- After intensive labour, UNHCR has completed the roll out of the registration and case management system PRIMES to partner HIAS. Over 230,000 active records have been migrated. This should speed up and simplify registration and assistance to those in need.
- According to the latest figures provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 37,455 humanitarian visas were issued to Venezuelans (6,934 at the three designated consulates and 30,521 in Ecuador) between 19 August 2019 and 23 July 2020. Some 8,208 visa applications are still pending. UNHCR will continue to support the regularization process with four consultants, while NGO partners will continue to provide legal orientation and assistance.
- In Sucumbíos Province, the number of people of concern to UNHCR requesting legal assistance for the issuance or renewal of refugee identification cards has increased, reaching more than 40 per cent of calls and messages. These cases are addressed directly by UNHCR or referred to the Ombudsman Office, the local Public Defender and to NRC for legal assistance.
- There have been reports indicating that an increasing number of Venezuelans are missing appointments to renew documentation because of lack of transport or resources to travel to the International Protection Directorate (DPIN) offices, lack of funds to pay for calls to communicate with DPIN, or fear of COVID-19 infection. Some others may have left the country.

## Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR trained associations of Venezuelans who participate in the Ambato Community Epidemiologic Surveillance in Tungurahua Province to early detect suspected COVID-19 cases. In Baños, the Public Health District will collaborate with UNHCR and the associations on a system of case referral to health care providers. In Quito, cases identified with COVID-19 symptoms will be directly referred for proper medical care, guidance and contact tracing. UNHCR has also donated PPEs to the Autonomous Decentralised Government of Santo Domingo. The governor highlighted UNHCR's support as essential to meet the needs in public hospitals and health centres.
- "[Conectados Ganamos](#)" is a joint initiative by UNHCR and its partner FUDELA, in alliance with Fundación Telefónica Movistar, to promote digital skills through online courses. Participants are provided with tools to find jobs and start entrepreneurship. Since its implementation after the quarantine was declared in Ecuador in mid-March in 2020, some 336 participants have taken advantage of the courses.
- UNHCR has started a social media monitoring and fact-checking project together with the Association of Venezuelan Journalists in Ecuador. This project aims to identify protection risks by monitoring comments and participation of Venezuelans on social media, in order to improve materials developed for communicating with communities and counter false information. The Association, together with UNHCR, will identify fake news and disseminate the actual facts.
- In Pichincha, UNHCR is providing guidance on access to education through the protection lines since calls about insertion in the school system have increased during the reporting period.
- During the reporting period, UNHCR supported the Municipality of Cuenca through a mobile phone and phone line that will operate as a hotline for people of concern and local community members with a LGBTIQ+ profile. This initiative was launched in the context of the Diversities Project.

## Government and Inter-agency Coordination

- The second joint needs assessment started on 22 July with 13 GTRM partners involved and some 70 volunteers. By 5 August, some 3,600 households had been interviewed. The process will be concluded by 7 August.
- The hydration point established in the southern border of Huaquillas by UNHCR partners CARE, ADRA and SJR, together with IOM, has been accessed by 290 people during the period of June to July, of which 60 were minors. Among this population, it is estimated that 70 per cent is moving north to return to Venezuela and 30 per cent are on their way to Peru.
- COOPI, a new UNHCR partner in El Oro Province, carried out the first delivery of 1,120 hygiene kits to LGTBI+ and human rights organizations in Machala, Santa Rosa and Huaquillas. Together with the kits, information material on self-care and tips for the prevention of COVID-19 were handed out. Twenty per cent of the assistance was directed to the host population, mainly from identified vulnerable groups.

## 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 38 per cent has been funded by 4 August. 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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