

### Key Figures

**185** cantons out of 221 have decided to partially reopen their economies by 30 June.

**4,527** deaths due to COVID-19. Ecuador is now the ninth country with most confirmed cases and deaths per capita in the region.

**26 per cent** of funding needs received by 1 July 2020.

**393,439** Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in Ecuador (December 2019).

### Situational Highlights

- Venezuelans are still entering Ecuador from Colombia. UNHCR has received reports of about 25 people per day entering through irregular paths. At the same time, the number of Venezuelans crossing into Colombia through informal paths may be increasing somewhat. UNHCR has received reports of 80-100 people crossing per day in Carchi Province. Both arrivals and departures seem to be increasing slightly. These numbers are not-official and are based on ad-hoc reports. The actual numbers may be higher as we are not able to quantify all irregular arrivals and departures. Even so, these reports would indicate the first increase in arrivals since the COVID-19 crisis started in mid-March. Some of the families are in transit to Peru, or other parts of Ecuador, and have contacted UNHCR partners for humanitarian assistance.
- The transmission rate of COVID-19 in Pichincha Province shows no sign of abating. According to media reports, hospital response capacity in Quito is over-stretched and there are delays in accessing intensive care units. A serious problem is the lack of hospital staff. WHO considers that all provinces in the country remain at high risk, except Galápagos (low) and six provinces (Guayas among them) which are considered to be at moderate risk.

### 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 -CBI, and core relief items-CRI);
- 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 persons of concern; and
- provision and equipment (for COVID-19) of emergency shelters.

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

- On 12 June, UNHCR installed an enlarged Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) at the local hospital in Baños, Tungurahua Province, providing space for eight COVID-19 patients at the time. The size of the enlarged RHU (pictured) allows for improved ventilation and adherence to COVID-19 distancing measures. It is the first of its kind built by UNHCR worldwide.



- The Municipality of Quito, with support from UNHCR, IOM and the Ecuadorian Red Cross, opened a temporary hospital for confirmed COVID-19 cases with light symptoms. The centre has capacity for 370 patients. UNHCR has contributed with important technical advice and some USD 45,000 worth of furniture.
- Since the onset of the COVID-19 emergency, UNHCR has supported 36 shelters and public institutions with hygiene kits, PPEs, rehabilitation, management support and trainings. In addition, 65 RHU have been installed in 23 health centres/hospitals and three temporary accommodation centres to be used as triage and isolation areas according to protocols for COVID-19
- On 28 and 29 May, 100 persons (people of concern to UNHCR -PoC-, as well as staff from the Ministry of Public Health in Sucumbíos) were tested for COVID-19 in Lago Agrio as part of a pilot of PCR testing in shelter facilities. The piloting is a joint initiative between UNHCR, Universidad de las Américas-Quito (UDLA) and the Ministry of Public Health. Both the epidemiological surveillance and the PCR testing aim to enable shelter-partners to identify COVID-19 cases prior to admission so as to ensure isolation and proper follow up.

## Humanitarian assistance:

- UNHCR and partners assisted 8,797 households between 18 March and 27 June. As lockdown measures continue, the number of people in destitute situations is increasing.
- UNHCR has increased the distribution of Core Relief Items (CRI) to respond to increased needs. UNHCR has mapped available local suppliers and the availability of local items at national and local levels. Twelve UNHCR partners are distributing CRIs throughout the country. So far 9,564 hygiene kits have been distributed, containing toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, towels, toilet paper, deodorant, shampoo, and sanitary pads were included. UNHCR has supported shelters, partners, hospitals and other actors with disinfection and hygiene supplies worth USD 122,341. UNHCR has acquired some USD 110,963 in 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 of the first line of response.
- UNHCR provided biosecurity and hygiene items (including alcohol, bleach, masks, gloves, mosquito repellent, diapers) to families displaced from Santa Rosa to Limones in Esmeraldas province, in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 amongst the displaced and the host community. According to the authorities, many displaced have returned to Santa Rosa, while 35 families, approximately 140 individuals, remain in Limones. Reportedly, the families were able to return as the security situation improved with the increased presence of the armed forces in the area.
- Several local Emergency Operations Committees (COEs) in the central highlands have made requests for assistance to UNHCR. In response, UNHCR has donated 905 food kits for people with specific protection needs, both among PoC and the host community. The kits are being distributed by local governments in the cities of Riobamba, Ambato, Latacunga and Baños de Agua Santa, with the support of associations of PoC.
- In Orellana Province, and with the support of UNHCR, the Colombian Association in Orellana received 60 food rations from the Colombian Consulate to be distributed to Colombian families in the capital city, Coca.
- UNHCR met with the Director of Social Action and Education (DASE) of the Municipality of Guayaquil to strengthen collaboration to include PoCs among their programmes. The authorities are keen to improve the inclusion of PoCs in the distribution of food kits, a nutritional programme for vulnerable children, and trainings and scholarships. UNHCR offered technical assistance on issues related to international protection and provided support by way of hygiene products to help them respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) is launching a series of videos to share practical strategies and emerging practices from the field in response to COVID-19. The [second video](#) has just been released and discusses adaptations to market monitoring systems in view of the pandemic



Read the [story](#) of Samuel Suárez, a Venezuelan physician who gave coronavirus advice to Ecuador's most vulnerable early in March, before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic.

## Protection

- From 17 March until 29 May, 1,237 cases have received legal advice by the Public Defender's Office, of which 789 are related to the RSD process and 194 to evictions. Of those eviction cases, 128, mostly of Venezuelans, have been positively resolved through mediation.
- The regularization process for Venezuelans has resumed. For now, it will focus on reviewing pending visa applications. According to the latest figures provided by the MFA, 35,563 VERHU visas have been issued (6,244 at the three designated consulates and 29,319 in Ecuador) between 19 August 2019 and 24 June 2020. Some 5,879 visa applications are still pending. UNHCR will continue to support the regularization process with four consultants who will support the MFA call center providing information to applicants. UNHCR partners provide legal orientation and assistance.
- The International Protection Directorate (DPIN) has also resumed activities, within the COVID related restrictions in place in each location. Registration, renewal of documentation and other procedures will remain on-line, while presential eligibility interviews will resume through appointments, strictly respecting physical distancing and sanitary measures. UNHCR will support the DPIN to disseminate information on the new procedures among the population of concern.

## Community-Based Protection

- UNHCR has expanded its capacity to reach persons of concern. Partner HIAS increased its capacity to receive calls and texts from a daily average of 367 to 1,200.
- From 18 March to 1 July, UNHCR attended to 11,854 cases (36,433 persons - 80 per cent Venezuelans and 16 per cent Colombians) through UNHCR Protection lines in Cuenca, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, Huaquillas, Ibarra, Lagro Agro, Quito and Tulcán. Fifty-eight per cent of calls were requests for CBI. The second most common concern was legal assistance.

- HELP ACNUR, a WhatsApp information line launched in March which provides information to persons of concern about a variety of subjects (e.g. CBI, food, shelter, regularization etc.) has now registered 8,845 people, and has sent around 463,000 messages by 11 June. Most of the queries received were about access to food and food cards.
- UNHCR Ecuador coordinated the publication of eleven opinion columns written by refugees in national media outlets such as GK and [El Telégrafo](#), and Spanish newspaper [El País](#). On 19 June, UNHCR and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized an [online forum](#) streaming short movies produced by young refugees and Ecuadorians as part of a coexistence project. Minister of FA José Valencia and UNHCR Representative María Clara Martín participated in the forum. In addition, more than 1,200 participants have registered for six free online workshops (on hairdressing, tango dancing and cooking, among other subjects) taught by refugees throughout June to celebrate WRD.
- A survey conducted by UNHCR of 528 PoC with small enterprises on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis revealed that 70 per cent of businesses could resist a “no-sales” period of 0 to 15 days. After a three months lockdown, 65 per cent of businesses have closed completely, and 30 per cent partially. Only 21 per cent have been able to continue their business through teleworking.
- UNHCR and UNICEF have completed a first draft of a joint plan of action as part of the Blueprint initiative between the two organizations, in the areas of child protection, education and WASH. Ecuador is one of ten pilot countries of this initiative.

## Government and Inter-agency Coordination

- Ecuador is a pilot of a virtual tool created by the Regional Platform for refugee and migrant youth and adolescents. This tool provides persons of concern to UNHCR with information about COVID-19 and their rights in Ecuador. Called “U-Report Uniendo Voces”, it will allow this group to have up-to-date information about their rights and available services. The information will also be distributed through social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Messenger.
- On 17 June, UNHCR participated in a round-table discussion on the design of the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion in Ecuador. The Central Bank of Ecuador and the World Bank presented the key points of the strategy, which aims to increase access to financial services, reduce poverty, and empower people. UNHCR will continue participating in thematic roundtables to ensure the inclusion of PoC.
- UNHCR finalized inputs to the UN strategy for socio-economic recovery in the context of COVID-19 in Ecuador, along five strategic pillars- health; social protection; micro and macro-economic recovery; and social cohesion/community resilience. The strategy will serve as the basis for Ecuador’s participation in the second round of funding of the COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

## Funding UNHCR’s response

UNHCR is appealing for USD 74 million to support vulnerable people in need of international protection in Ecuador. Only 26 per cent has been funded by 1 July. The best way to support UNHCR’s appeal is through softly earmarked contributions. Such flexible funding at global level will be key in allowing a timely response to the evolving needs wherever required.

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

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