

## ECUADOR

### Situation Report – March 2019



Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

- Flows of Venezuelan refugees and migrants to Ecuador were unusually low in March due to the Inter-Ministerial Agreements 0001/2019 and 0002/2019, as well as the protests and roadblocks by indigenous groups in Colombia.
- New cases of arbitrary returns of Venezuelan nationals emerged at the Rumichaca international border. The cases were registered with the Ombudsman, who has taken legal action before a judicial court in Tulcán.
- On 27 March, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of an interim measure filed for by the Ombudsman's Office, reversing the prerequisite of certified criminal records for the Venezuelan population to enter into the Ecuadorian territory.
- 63,291 persons received humanitarian assistance<sup>1-2</sup>
- 20,842 persons received protection assistance
- 752 persons received socio-economic and cultural integration assistance
- In total, 84,885 persons received assistance
- 34% of the persons who received assistance were women and over 45% were children and adolescents
- 671 civil servants benefited from capacity-building activities
- 28,000 persons accessed key information on promotion and protection of rights.

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

During the reporting period, refugee and migrant flows from Venezuela have remained relatively low through the regular border entry points, given that Inter-Ministerial Agreements 0001/2019 and 0002/2019 continued to be implemented. In addition, the incoming flows were unusually low at the Rumichaca International Bridge due to the continued protests and blocking of the routes to Ecuador by the indigenous groups in Popoyan, Colombia. This generated increased arrivals in the province of Sucumbios through the San Miguel border crossing point.

On March 12, a case related to the arbitrary return of 12 Venezuelan citizens was presented at the judicial court in Tulcán. The 12 Venezuelan nationals were arrested and returned to Colombia when they tried to cross the border irregularly near to Rumichaca, Tulcán. The Ombudsman's Office recorded the event and initiated the corresponding legal actions before a judicial court, urging the State to observe the principles of prohibition of collective expulsion of persons, *non-refoulement* and guarantees of rights. Among the arbitrarily returned persons, cases of pregnant women and persons in need of international protection were identified. These cases were attended to by the members of the GTRM at the border and their regular access to the territory was eventually guaranteed.

During the reporting period, the Ombudsman's Office, together with civil society organizations, applied to the Constitutional Court for an interim measure against Inter-Ministerial Agreements 001/2019 and 002/2019 limiting the access of the Venezuelan nationals to Ecuador. On 27 March the Constitutional Court ruled on the unconstitutionality of the interposed measures, reversing both ministerial measures and temporarily suspending the prerequisite of criminal records for the Venezuelan population to enter into the Ecuadorian territory. The judgement was implemented at the border points from the 29 March, leading to a reduction in cases needing assistance to access the territory.

<sup>1</sup> The quantitative data measures direct assistance and does not include information or advocacy activities. The numbers displayed correspond to people assisted and not to other metrics (e.g. institutions assisted, shelters etc.).

<sup>2</sup> The numbers of persons assisted reflect direct and individual assistance interventions. These figures may, however, include persons who have been assisted several times through different interventions.

## RESPONSE OVERVIEW

### Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

- **63,291** persons received emergency assistance in March 2019, **75%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **34%** of the persons assisted were **women**, **22% men** and **44%** were **children and adolescents**
- **3,732** people accessed information and contacted family members through the internet points at the borders

Area of intervention 1 continues to present the largest number of assisted beneficiaries, representing 75% of the total population benefitting from the assistance provided by the GTRM members. The main areas of assistance reported by the partners include food security (close to 48,000 beneficiaries attended with food kits, food vouchers and food assistance provided in shelters and kitchens), temporary shelter, provision of hygiene kits, humanitarian transport and multi-purpose cash transfer interventions.

More than 28,000 persons accessed various types and sources of information on guarantee of rights and obligations, migration regularization, visa procedures, access to asylum procedures and services. The information points are located at the border areas and cities of destination for refugees and migrants. Additionally, information was provided on prevention of trafficking, gender-based violence, protection of children and adolescents, as well as complaint mechanisms and emergency numbers.

### Area of Intervention 2: Protection

- **20,842** persons received protection assistance in February 2019, **25%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **23%** of the persons assisted were **women**, **17% men** and **59%** were **children and adolescents**
- **4,706** members of the civil society benefitted from **capacity building**

During March it was identified through protection monitoring that 87% of the non-admissions to the territory of adult refugees and migrants from Venezuela was due to the persons not being in possession of a certified criminal record. Despite the exceptions provided for in the Inter-Ministerial Agreement 0002/2019, cases of persons with medical issues, disabilities, as well as pregnant women being denied access to the territory, were registered.

The First Regional Meeting for the Protection of LGBTI Persons in a Situation of Human Mobility was held during the month, which culminated in the formation of the Regional Network for the Protection of LGBTI Persons. The Network consists of 6 countries of the region (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Chile) and 12 civil society organizations focused on LGTBI issues. The formation of the network will enable the exchange of information, good practices and joint planning of projects, activities and coordination of work in the region.

### Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

- **752** persons assisted in March 2019, representing **1%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **41%** of the persons assisted were **women**, **22% men** and **36%** were **children and adolescents**
- **48 interventions** in the field of **livelihoods**

Education Districts were supported to analyse the strategies guaranteeing access to education for children and adolescents in a situation of human mobility. However, it was not possible to confirm the quotas in the education system, due to the enrolment process opening only in April, as was informed by the district authorities. The GTRM partners continue to advocate with the authorities and to provide guidance regarding the access to education for refugees and migrants.

Access to the homologation of professional titles of refugees and migrants from Venezuela continues to be a challenge, due to the impossibility of obtaining apostilled documents from the Venezuelan public institutions responsible for the procedures.

In the area of access to livelihoods and technical/professional training, several training and outreach workshops with the private sector to connect professional practices were organized. Similarly, financial inclusion workshops were held with private institutions, with the objective of seeking access to financial services, such as provision of microcredits for enterprises requiring capital, and strengthening of the enterprises at a production and commercial level.

#### **Area of Intervention 4: Support to the host Government**

- **618 public servants benefitted from capacity-building** in protection, border management, prevention of GBV and SRH
- **53 health personnel trained**

The Ombudsman's Office was trained on identification processes and on access to asylum and refuge mechanisms, as well as on migratory and protection alternatives for children and adolescents in a situation of human mobility.

The process carried out by the Ministry of Education for the definition of the public policy of inclusion of persons in a situation of human mobility to the Educational System continues, through the operationalization of the ministerial agreement 042-A.

Workshops were held for MIES officials on the best practices for the eradication of poverty in vulnerable groups. Additionally, several partners had discussions with the Ministry of Health and Tourism to explore alternatives for the integration of Venezuelan nationals whose degrees have been verified and for their profiles to be integrated into the State's employment portfolio.

## **COORDINATION**

- The Protection Working Group is developing an inter-agency mechanism for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse through a series of training for all personnel engaged in response activities and attending to the refugee and migrant population in national and field offices. These workshops will take place during the months of April and May.

- The national GTRM coordination team carried out a field mission to Huaquillas and Tulcán to reinforce the articulation of the needs on the field with the national working groups and to meet field-based partners to share the advances made in the framework of the Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants, while seeking to standardize the reporting and coordination methods in the field through the local GTRM.
- The Working Group on Information Management initiated a formalization process with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility for official information-sharing of data on the refugee and migrant population residing and transiting in the country.
- The first meeting of the Cash Based Interventions Working Group was held with the participation of 15 partners. During the meeting, a co-leadership between a UN agency and a civil society organization within the framework of the Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD) platform was agreed upon and draft terms of reference were developed.

## PLATFORM PARTNERS

ADRA | CARE | CSMM-PIDHDD Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos - Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo | Dialogo Diverso | FUDELA Fundacion de las Americas | HIAS Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society | ILO | IOM | Jesuit Refugee Service Ecuador | Misión Scalabriniana | Norwegian Refugee Council | Plan International Ecuador | Red Cross Ecuador | RET International | UNDP | UNESCO | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | UNOCHA | UNWOMEN | World Vision Ecuador | WFP | WHO

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