COVID-19: Confirmed cases have surpassed 300,000 nationwide. Ecuador’s Ministry of Public Health created a website to release the vaccination plan, aiming to vaccinate 60% of the population in four phases. The platform allows for people included in phase one (health personnel, older persons (>65), public security staff, professors, persons with disabilities, waste recyclers) to register for obtaining a vaccination date. Recognized refugees holding an Ecuadorian ID-card will be able to register, but there are concerns that the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and Venezuelans with irregular migratory status may be excluded.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS: UNHCR and partners identify 500 - 600 Venezuelan caminantes entering daily through visible paths during working hours, although numbers might be higher as many cross the border in private transport at night. Additionally, 44 Haitians arrived in Ecuador from Brazil and Peru through the Tiputini river (Amazon region) and then went to Orellana. Local authorities and humanitarian organizations provided shelter, food, and other basic needs. UNHCR is in contact with the group, and they intend to reach North America.

PROTECTION CONCERNS: The security situation at the northern border has deteriorated. Community leaders informed UNHCR that the presence of Colombian irregular groups has increased. As a consequence, an “informal” curfew applies at 6:00 p.m. in some communities. In Esmeraldas and Sucumbios, Ecuadorian armed forces have discovered a clandestine drug laboratory, coca plantations, firearms and ammunition. This has generated fear and internal displacement. Xenophobia against Venezuelan refugees and migrants is increasing. Near Otavalo, community leaders requested the eviction of 34 Venezuelans due to alleged increased criminality. In Túcán, the high number of families with children sleeping on the streets continues to cause complaints among the host community, who have also asked for humanitarian organizations to relocate.

Figures at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>70,246</th>
<th>443,705</th>
<th>7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>people have been recognized as refugees, 97% are Colombian</td>
<td>Venezuelans are currently living in Ecuador.</td>
<td>of financial requirements have been funded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our response in 2021 in figures

1 January - to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7</th>
<th>2,855</th>
<th>218,958</th>
<th>36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RHUs installed to serve as triage and pre-hospitalization areas.</td>
<td>Hygiene kits delivered to population of concern</td>
<td>messages sent to population of concern through UNHCR’s WhatsApp chatbot (from 1 November)</td>
<td>hand washing stations installed in strategic points nationwide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Operational context

COVID-19: Confirmed cases have surpassed 300,000 nationwide. Ecuador’s Ministry of Public Health created a website to release the vaccination plan, aiming to vaccinate 60% of the population in four phases. The platform allows for people included in phase one (health personnel, older persons (>65), public security staff, professors, persons with disabilities, waste recyclers) to register for obtaining a vaccination date. Recognized refugees holding an Ecuadorian ID-card will be able to register, but there are concerns that the hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers and Venezuelans with irregular migratory status may be excluded.

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UNHCR Ecuador and the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) organized four webinars for communication colleagues from Ecuador, Latinamerica and HQ on promoting inclusive and accessible communication for persons with disabilities. All webinars were simultaneously translated using sign language.

Recordings of sessions are available through these links:
- Webinar 1: Accessible Audiovisual Communications
- Webinar 2: Accessible Information for persons with Visual Disabilities
- Webinar 3: Easy-to-Read Information for Persons with Intellectual Disability
- Webinar 4: Accessible Webpages

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UNHCR supports more than 130 wifi spots to facilitate online education

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of connectivity to access information and services, especially distance education. For this reason UNHCR, together with local authorities, installed free internet spots in public spaces in the provinces of Pichincha, Carchi and Imbabura.

The WIFI networks are benefitting more than 130,000 Ecuadorians and refugees. Their main objective is to facilitate access to online education. In addition, they allow refugees and Ecuadorians to continue accessing services that are now provided virtually, including the process for seeking asylum or registering for the vaccination plan.

Enter here to know the wifi spots location.

In the picture: refugee girls in Pimampiro receive online classes thanks to the wifi spot installed in the community’s football court.
UNHCR supported the opening of La Salita, a community center for refugee and Ecuadorian sex workers in Machala. The space is administrated by PLAPERTS, the Latin American Platform of Sex Workers, and Flor de Azalea, a community-based organization supporting sex workers and promoting women’s rights. This space will host community meetings and activities focusing on strengthening peer support networks, prevention and response to HIV and other sexual transmitted infections, protection against gender based violence, among other topics.

UNHCR has been actively engaging with PLAPERTS and Flor de Azalea. In 2020, in the framework of HIV funds, the operation supported a activities with both organizations, including donations for the establishment of this new space, access to livelihood activities, and institutional strengthening through capacity building, regularization, and support to health promoters in partnership with CARE.

UNHCR strengthens community leaders’ knowledge on communication

In December 2020, UNHCR Ecuador supported a group of community leaders to develop their community journalism skills and improve their engagement with Communication with Communities activities. After receiving training on storytelling, video and podcast production from Radio Cocoa, participants were invited to present communication project proposals to be funded by UNHCR.

Three projects were selected and were now published. Results are available here:

- **Documentary:** Positive stories of refugees and migrants
- **Animated story:** What is wrong with mom and dad?
- **Facebook Information Page:** Life crossing borders

UNHCR conmemorates International Women’s Day through art

In Esmeraldas, UNHCR and Cantonal Gender Committee launched the Art Virtual Event “Festiarte, our voices for gender equality.” In Quito, the Frente Unido de Mujeres de Tumbocamba renovated the image of its headquarters with a mural created by refugee women, La Changa Popular Arts Collective and UNHCR. In Ambato, Guayaquil and Pimampiro murals were also painted in commemoration of International women’s Day.

Moreover, in Lago Agrio, UNHCR coordinated radio conversations in Radio Sucumbios with organizations from Lago Agrio’s SGBV Roundtable and refugee businesswomen, sharing associative business and other livelihoods strategies.
We thank the contributions of our donors
Updated to 16 March, 2021

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