



70,076

recognized refugees. The highest number in Latin America.

6%

of financial requirements for 2021 have been funded.

934

confirmed cases of COVID-19 among Venezuelans.

20

partnership agreements signed for 2021.

Jhony Segovia is from Venezuela and lives in Esmeraldas. With the support of UNHCR and its partner FEPP, he developed a small entrepreneurship called "Tu Mercadito Exprés" to deliver food products to at home. The project aims at supporting the early economic recovery from COVID-19. "Although my business is small, I pay my taxes on time," he said. (Photo: UNHCR/Hugo León)

Operational context

COVID-19: COVID-19 cases continue to rise throughout the country, and health centers are full. In Quito, Ecuador's capital, the positivity rate grew to 30,11%. In Tulcan, the main point of entry of Venezuelans, authorities decreed "Red Alert," imposing restrictive measures to prevent contagion. To prevent the spread of the virus, borders will be closed until 1 March. On 20 January, the first 8,000 doses of vaccines arrived in the country they began to be administered to health workers, with several allegations of irregularities in their implementation.

BORDER MOVEMENTS: Despite the border closure, the number of Venezuelans entering Ecuador from Colombia increased significantly. Refugees and migrants continue to arrive through irregular paths, exposing themselves to thefts, extortion, sexual violence, and exploitation. Up to 2,500 Venezuelans transit daily at Tulcan's Bus Terminal, heading towards Peru. Even if buses are supposed to operate at 30% of their capacity, they are departing full. In Lago Agrio, newly arrived Venezuelans identified at the bus terminal

increased from 30 to 80 daily. In other cities, such as Ibarra, shelters and community kitchens are full.

At the southern border, a humanitarian situation is developing as more Venezuelans are sleeping rough in Huaquillas, waiting for Peruvian authorities to reduce border enforcement measures.

PROTECCION CONCERNS: Requests for assistance and asylum from newly arrived Venezuelans and Colombians arriving from Nariño, Putumayo and Buenaventura continue to rise. Most urgent needs remain shelter and food, followed by legal assistance.

In Ibarra, requests for legal advice and support for Venezuelan SGBV survivors have also increased. In Lago Agrio, face-to-face cases assisted by UNHCR were all re-entering Ecuador after returning to Venezuela at the beginning of the pandemic.

UNHCR has identified Venezuelans begging in parks and avenues at high risk of exploitation and abuse.

Access to documentation improves refugees' lives

Between December 2020 and January 2021, some 1,000 refugees and members of the indigenous Awá community in El Chical and Maldonado received their identity cards after participating in registration brigades. Having documentation, besides preventing statelessness will allow them to access basic services. For example, domestic gas tanks, essential for cooking, are delivered upon presentation of an identity card.

At the end of December 2020, UNHCR, together with the Civil Registry, the Ombudsman's Office, and UNHCR'S partner FUDELA, organized two brigades. In the first one, 134 refugees participated. Usually, this process is carried out only in three cities: Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca, the closest more than eight hours away by bus. The main objective of this brigade was to mitigate the risks of contracting COVID-19 while travelling and to support those who did not have the resources to travel to another city. During the second brigade, 822 people underwent the identification process, 90% of them from the Awá indigenous community. The delivery of ID cards ended during the third week of January.

"With my ID card I will be able to ask for a loan to plant more naranjillas."

The crop is my family's livelihood."

Estela
Colombian Refugee

[Listen to Estela's testimony \(in spanish\)](#)

Inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities



In coordination with RIADIS, the 'Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of People with Disabilities and their Families', UNHCR Ecuador adapted its information materials and communication channels to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. The operation developed printed materials in braille and easy to read leaflets, and has worked together with the Global Digital Engagement team to ensure Help.UNHCR platform complies with accessibility guidelines for United Nations Website. In February, the operation will offer a four weeks training on inclusive communication for UNHCR and partners staff.

UNHCR donates equipment to support local integration efforts



UNHCR is delivering equipment to support refugees' local integration efforts in Ecuador, especially access to education and livelihoods. In Esmeraldas, UNHCR donated three industrial sewing machines to the Ecuadorian International Women's Training Center of Esmeraldas to strengthen livelihood training for gender-based violence victims.

Additionally, in the framework of the "Community Internet Access Networks" project, UNHCR Huaquillas donated electronic devices and provided connectivity services to schools and colleges attended by local, refugee and migrant children.

Refugees and migrants received certificates

of labor competence

Listen to Mary's testimony
(in spanish)

On 9 January, 294 refugees and migrants completed the process of labor competency recognition regulated by the Ministry of Labor. The process was organized by UNHCR's Livelihood Unit together with the Technical University of Loja, an accredited certification body with a national presence.

The labor competency certification is an instrument that seeks to recognize the knowledge and skills of people to perform an occupation, regardless of whether they have a professional degree. These certifications will facilitate access to formal employment for refugees and migrants, who have multiple skills to contribute to Ecuador's economic recovery.

When people are forced to flee their countries, they do not have time to carry reference letters, labor certificates and academic degrees. With this tool, they will have more opportunities of contributing with their skills to their host communities.

Mary Rosado is a 36-year-old Venezuelan. She fled her country in 2019 and, even if she had more than 19 years of experience in the administration area back in Venezuela, it was not easy to find a job here in Ecuador. She is one of the refugees and migrants who completed the certification process. Now she is working as administrative assistant with a temporary contract and she hopes the certification will give her new job opportunities.

The certification tests were conducted by UTPL, under all biosafety protocols at their facilities in Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, Loja and Manta, and ended on January 9, 2021. The list of beneficiaries was provided by UNHCR after an open call in which they registered candidates through email, phone call and messaging.

The five profiles by labor competencies selected for the certification process were: office automation (258 people certified), specialized sales management (9 people), development of applications with web technologies (14 people), occupational risk prevention: construction and public works (4 people), and occupational risk prevention: electrical energy (9 people).

Our response to COVID-19 in figures



26,106

families benefitted from CBI Multipurpose and Protection transactions.



730,876

health material such as PPE, sanitizers, thermometers and oximeters donated.



183

Refugee Housing Units installed to serve as triage and prehospitalization areas.



12,519

hygiene kits donated to population of concern, shelters and public



59

hand-washing stations installed at shelters and health centers.



16,360

clothes donated to 3968 people of concern.



27,670

food kits delivered to families in situation of extreme vulnerability.



26,310

cases attended from UNHCR's emergency hotlines nationwide.



9,1137

users access to UNHCR's WhatsApp automated line.

Stories from the field

Stiven, the future Chemical Engineer who dreams of becoming an expert in the genetics field

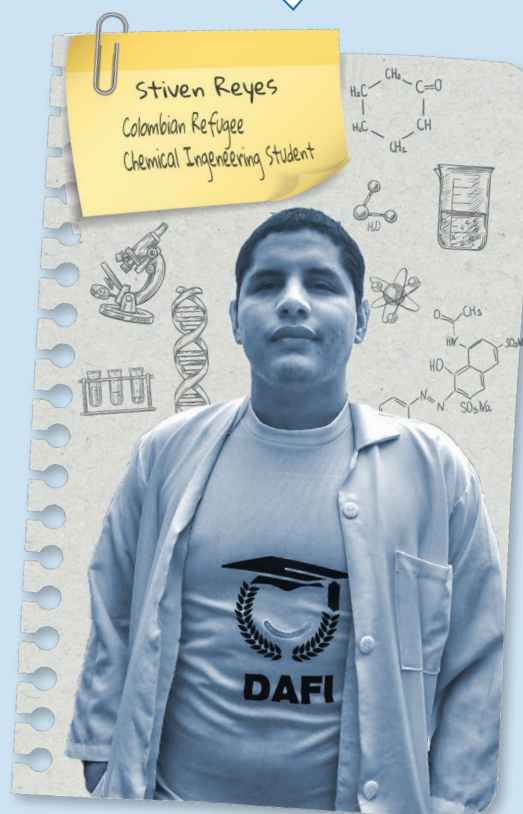
Stiven is 22 years old and is about to obtain a degree in Chemical Engineering. When he was only 10 years old, he and his family were forced to flee Colombia to save their lives. When Stiven, his sister and parents arrived in Ecuador, they lived in several cities until they decided to settle in Guayaquil.

For the first two years, Stiven and his sister were not able to go to school because they were asked for their academic record, a document they were not able to take when they fled Colombia. For two years, Stiven and his sister saw their education interrupted, until one day they were able to contact some relatives who sent them their academic record.

Stiven always loved studying and, at the age of 17, he graduated from high school. Back in Colombia, he was a top student so he was attending classes with classmates two years older than him. For this reason, he was able to graduate at the age most students do in Ecuador.

According to Stiven, receiving an education allowed him to get to know the new country he arrived in, helped him adapt to the new culture, make friends and feel integrated.

After graduation, Stiven decided he wanted to attend college. He knew it was not easy. All over the world, only 3% of refugees access higher education.



However, with the support of UNHCR and its partner HIAS, he obtained a DAFI scholarship funded by the German Government. Thanks to this, he was able to pay for educational expenses, such as books and other academic materials. He is currently coursing his eighth semester of Chemical Engineering. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been involved in a research project based that analyses how wastewater treatment plants handle water possibly contaminated with the virus.

As soon as he graduates, he hopes to move to Germany to study a master's degree. His dream is to work as an academic researcher in the genetics field.

We thank the contributions of our donors

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For more information, please contact Ilaria Rapido, Public Information Associate: rapido@unhcr.org